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by C. H. Cogswell

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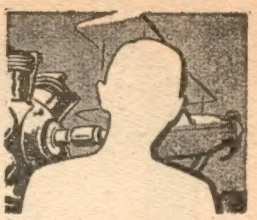

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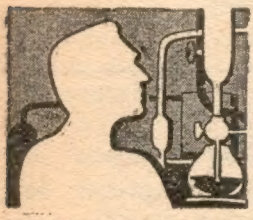

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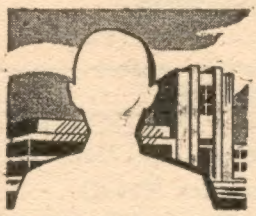

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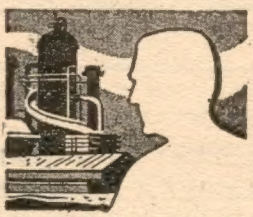

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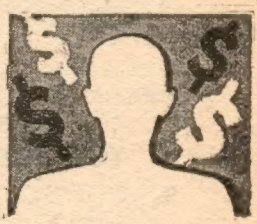

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ROBERT W. LOWNDES, Editor

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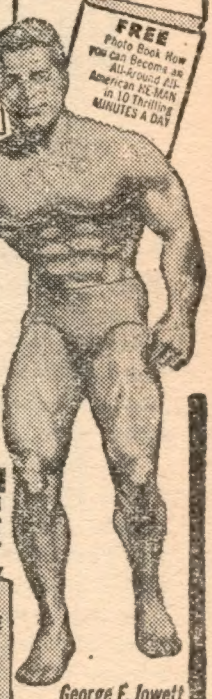

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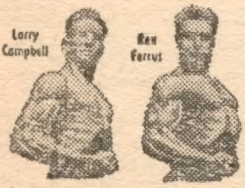

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By Harold Gluck

CHARLIE WRESTLES A BUFFALO

CHARLIE SIRINGO lived through the west of yesterday; he knew Billy the Kid, Shanghai Pierce, Pat Garrett, John W. Poe, and a host of others who lived on either side of the law. Charlie had adventures—either because he was foolhardy or just didn't know what it was to be "scaired".

He hired himself out to the firm of Bates & Beals to help drive a herd of steers—twenty-five hundred head—to the Texas Panhandle, where David T. Beals intended starting a new ranch. The outfit consisted of eight men besides the boss. Charlie had six good horses, with such names as Comanche, Allisan, Last Chance, Creeping Moses, Damfido, and Beat-and-be-damned. The last-named horse was later shot full of arrows because he wouldn't hurry, while being driven off by a band of Indians who had made a raid on the camp.

It was the sixth day out of Dodge, and after crossing the Cimarron, that trouble beckoned to Charlie Siringo. Camp had been made and Mr. Bates saw some of the cattle slipping off into a bunch of sand-hills; he asked Charlie to ride out and turn them back. Charlie went, leaving his pistol and rifle in camp, thinking he would be back in a few minutes. He soon turned the cattle back—and then a large herd of buffaloes dashed by the camp headed west. The cowboys all ran out with their guns and began firing. Charlie became so excited that he put spurs to his pony, deciding to overtake and kill a few buffalo; he just plumb forgot that he didn't have any kind of shooting iron with him.

The time was about four in the afternoon. The buffalo had over a mile start, and about sundown our hero caught up with the tired herd. Their tongues were sticking out and nothing bothered them. Charlie went for his six-shooter; it wasn't there! He went for his rifle; it wasn't there. So he took his rope from the saddle-horn and threw it onto a yearling heifer. When the rope tightened the yearling began to bleat and its mammy broke loose out of the herd and went for Charlie.

Charlie tried to turn the rope loose, so as to get out of the way, but couldn't as it was drawn very tight around the saddle-horn. After raking some of the surplus hair from the pony's hind-quarters, mammy buffalo turned and struck out after the still fleeing herd.

Now a very simple question arouse in Charlie's mind: "How are you going to kill your buffalo?" Breaking her

[*Turn To Page* 8]

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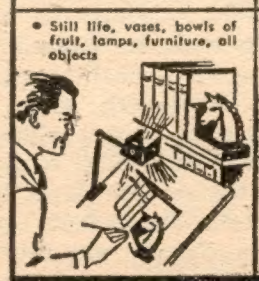

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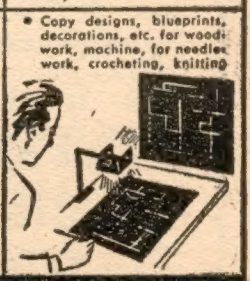

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neck was the only way he could think of at the moment. After trying it several times, by running "against" the rope at full speed, he gave it up as a blasted failure. He concluded to cut the rope and let her go. He had with him an old rusty pocket knife; the blade was rusted. He tried to open the little blade; couldn't do it. He sawed away at the rope with the big blade but made no headway.

So in utter disgust, Charlie just dismounted and decided to have a wrestling match with the buffalo. Crazy as it may seem, he managed to get her down by getting one hand fastened to her under the jaw, with his other hand, he got hold of one horn and started twisting her neck. He soon found there was a difference wrestling with a bull and a buffalo. Then he tied her up and got the knife out again. He broke off the big blade and used it to pry up the small blade; he cut her throat and that was the end of the buffalo.

Charlie was victor, no doubt about it. Then something bothered him. He might tell the story to the boys back at the camp, but would they believe him? You needed evidence—so with that little knife blade he skinned the buffalo and cut out a small chunk of meat. It was pitch-dark when he started towards camp. About midnight he became sleepy and called it quits. He spread the buffalo hide down, hair up, and fell asleep. But he hadn't gotten forty winks when he was covered from head to foot with ants, the fresh hide had attracted them.

He reached camp just about time two of the boys had decided that maybe Charlie and Misfortune had met and were going out to look for him. At least he had a story to tell and the evidence to back it up.

MEET THE RUSTLER

The object of the rustler was simple and definite. He wanted to transfer the ownership of cattle, without the knowledge of the rightful owner, and without giving legal consideration. There have been writers who have created a certain type of sentimentality for cowboys who figured out how to change the brand mark. It did offer a relatively easy way to begin a herd for yourself when you were short of cash. While they were building the railroad, there was a good market for beef to feed the husky workers; and when the railroad was completed, there was the market to the east, the packing houses. If the rancher happened to be wealthy, or was an absentee owner in England, you could try to talk about the poor man being frozen out by the stronger and wealthier outfits. But if you kept your eye on the eight ball, rustling was stealing, no matter how many kinds of words you used to describe the process. Billy-The-Kid and his gang were rustlers and they didn't even bother to change the brands; Charles A. Siringo started to get his experience as a range-detective when he went after some stolen cattle bearing the L. X. brand that Billy had stolen and sold. There was a growing demand for beef, as mining towns grew up and as the poor Indian found himself on the reservation with his Uncle Sam paying for the meat bill. In the early seventies, refrigerator cars were being pulled by the Iron Horse.

The rustler who worked alone had to be quick and efficient; the use of the branding iron to go over the old brand and change it into a new brand was good stuff for a movie scene. Unless the rustler were a moron, he knew he was carrying the evidence with him and a rope might end his existence on the range. A length of haywire, or telegraph wire, was more efficient and less damaging as evidence; the rustler could fold it up and conceal it with ease. Even without artistic ability, he could bend that wire into the shape of any desired brand. And when he was finished with a wire brand-changing job, it was sort of difficult to convince a court there was such a thing as an old brand and a newly-burned brand on the same hide.

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A shadow leaped from the rocks—a shadow of fury

DOUBLE AMBUSH

BY C. H. COGSWELL

LARRY Glenning lay concealed in the willow grove by the creek which skirted Shack Town and looked up through dense branches at the clear blue sky peeping through. The sun was high, yet he did not move as he lay on his blanket. He felt refreshed but he was in that stage between sleep and wakefulness where it was just pleasant to lie there and let his mind wander. He let it dwell fondly on Laura Lanier and the memory of her lips when he had kissed her the night before in the jail. Wary of women generally, and reluctant to be used for their secret purposes, he cursed himself for a fool to let himself go on this way on such short acquaintance.

He had known Laura only a few days. It was not to be supposed that a man and a woman can fall in love —where they face the world as one being—overnight; still that was the way Larry had been thinking of her

Glenning knew about the strategy of splitting his opponents in two, then tackling one at a time; but he had a variation on this—he'd divide them, then get them to attack each other!

Feature "Larry Glenning" Novel

right from the start. It all seemed predestined that he should rescue her from the arms of the Wild Man of Music Mountain, who went by the name of Jethro; Glenning chuckled as he recalled how she, in turn, had tried to help him by beating on Jethro's head with her slipper. Laura was no namby-pamby girl to stand around and wring her hands when her man was in danger. Even though she did not know him at the time, her protective instincts had come boiling to the surface and she had fought as best she could with what equipment she had.

But what amazed Larry more than anything was his changed attitude toward life. He had been disdainful of danger before; he believed that this life was just a transition, and that when the time was right and his job here accomplished, he would pass on to another job in another sphere of existence. It didn't matter when it happened; he was ready.

Yet, in these past few days when the threat of death was constantly with him, he had put a new value on his life here on earth, began to perceive a more immediate picture of heaven—here and now, with Laura Lanier in the center of the picture. Where he would have been willing to meet death half way before, he was reluctant to venture toward it now. Larry felt like a skulking coyote here in the willows, but it was much better to be a live coyote than a dead marshal. He well knew that Matthews would enjoy putting the last shovelful of earth on his grave up there on that little knell where they had buried Cinders.

Larry smiled grimly at the thought, arose and stretched. *If they bury me up there, they'd better line up a large plot because Matthews is on the wrong side of the Lord. Each new marshal he hires will be shot and planted up there beside me and I don't think my corpse would like that.... I'd hate to think of the same worms eating me that been chewing on men like Cinders.*

●

IT WAS ALMOST noon when Glenning got around to the livery stables. Graham sat out in front smoking and talking to Johnny Pepper. "Mornin' Graham," Larry drawled. "Why you grinning like a jackass eatin' barb wire? Something funny?"

"Good afternoon, you mean," Graham responded tartly. "Maybe it's funny, maybe it's not so funny. Wait and see."

"You got me a dog, huh?"

"Something like that." Graham sobered and studied Glenning's face skeptically. "Cross between a horse and a dog. Got him tied around back; want to take a look? Didn't want to scare you off. If you ain't satisfied, I'll take him back and get your money back."

They walked around behind the barn, where a huge beast was tied to the corral fence. Horses in the corral gave the animal a wide berth. "This is Joe," Graham said as if introducing a person. "Joe, this is your new master."

Joe was sitting there beside the fence with his mouth open as if he were laughing. He was a sort of muddy cream color with pointed ears and bright intelligent eyes. As Larry approached, the dog stood up, wagged a stubby tail then reared up putting his paws on Glenning's shoulder. A large pink tongue flipped out and he began to lick Glenning's face. Graham and Johnny Pepper roared with laughter as Larry tried to avoid the dog's affection. "I say now, Joe, I'm glad to meet you and all that but I'm not so sure our relationship has come to the kissing stage yet!" He backed away from the dog and wiped his face with his sleeve.

"How do you like him?" Graham asked hopefully.

"Well now, Graham..." Larry was

Elkins had been well-liked by the other miners.

slightly embarrassed and at a loss as to what he should say. "What I had in mind was something smaller—like an airedale or some small dog with plenty of spirit. All I wanted him for was to wake me up in case someone came prowling around."

"Joe won't even wake you up," Graham explained as he looked at the dog; "he'll take care of the prowler for you."

"He acts right friendly," Larry argued worriedly. "How do I know he won't kiss my prospective customers instead of biting them?"

"All you got to do is tell him," Graham explained. "Here, I'll show you." He took Larry's hat and placed it on the ground just within the radius of the chain. "Here Joe, on guard boy!"

The dog cocked his head to one side as if indicating agreement. "Now go try to get your hat," Graham said.

Larry hesitated and looked dubiously at the dog. "By golly, I believe he'd tear me up. How do you tell him to do or not to do?"

"Go ahead," Graham persisted. "Go get your hat!"

Larry reached down and got his hat. The dog watched him with bright eyes, stood up and wagged his tail. Glenning put on his hat and turned to Graham. "What's the gag?" he asked.

"He knew it was your hat," Graham explained; "now try it again and you tell him."

Larry tossed his hat on the ground a bit impatiently. "Here Joe," he said sharply. "On guard boy!"

"Go ahead, Johnny, try to get his hat," Graham told the boy.

Johnny approached the hat and started as if to get it; as he stooped over Joe gave a deep rumbling growl. Johnny persisted and grabbed the hat. Joe lunged furiously toward him and would have grabbed the boy but for the chain.

"What do you think of that?" Graham asked.

"He'll do, if I can control him," Larry grinned. "Unchain him; I'll take him with me."

Graham unhooked the chain from the dog's collar. "He's almost human. You can talk to him just like you would a person and he seems to understand. You can leave him at the jail and he won't let anyone in or out if you tell him. He don't bark much while on guard, but you'll know he means business."

THEY WALKED toward the jail and Joe fell in behind Larry, as if he knew what it was all about. When they got to the jail Graham stopped them. "You're the boss, Glenning," he said. "Joe is a military dog, he's used to guard duty. Take him around the jail and show him what you want guarded, then go off and leave him."

Larry took the dog around the jail then paused in front. "On guard boy," he said and gave the dog a pat on the head. "Don't let anyone out or in."

The dog lay down with his head on his paws, his bright eyes alert as he watched them depart. In a few minutes he got up and walked slowly around the building then settled down again for a few minutes rest. "He'll do that every five minutes until you get back," Graham said proudly. "He's almost human; if he could shoot he'd make a good soldier."

"The only thing," Larry said worriedly, "is that he's so big. He'll probably eat me out of house and home."

"Put it on your expense account," Graham advised. "It's an important item if you want to get any rest, and he'll be cheaper than hiring another man."

Larry grinned. "Should have thought of that; but where is the money coming from to pay for the expense? Matthews is already bucking like a stubborn mule against paying my salary."

"Set up a taxing system," Graham suggested. "Everyone in Shack Town should be willing to contribute his share toward law and order."

Larry looked at Graham with amusement in his brown eyes. "While you was over to the Fort after this dog yesterday, I took a little ride up through the gulch; I'm about as popular around here as a polecat is at a fancy ladies' afternoon tea."

●

THE THREE were eating in Chung Ling's restaurant. They were early and alone at the counter. "Had a little excitement while you was gone, Graham."

"You mean the holdup?" Graham asked. "I heard about that. When I couldn't find you this morning I figured you was out on their trail."

"It was a frameup," Larry explained. "Matthews framed it with his own men but he wanted to make it look as if White-Eyes Sanderson did it. Slim Rogan is about the same size as White-Eyes. Matthews is no fool, Graham; he wants to get rid of me and he's afraid of White-Eyes. I think he figured that, if I was ambushed, he could get a posse of miners and they would hunt White-Eyes down and hang him. That way, he would kill two birds with one stone. I was tipped off to what the deal was."

"How?" Graham looked at Larry appraisingly. "A woman?"

"Yes," Glenning admitted reluctantly.

"One of Matthews' girls?"

"I'm not saying," Larry responded tersely.

"Sorry," Graham apologized. "Didn't mean to pry. What did you do about it?"

"Matthews offered me a thousand dollars reward to get his money back," Larry went on. "I thought that was too liberal—unless there was a hitch to it. The funny thing about the deal was, Matthews was double-crossed. Slim Rogan had two other men in on the deal, too, and they robbed *him* after he got away with Matthews'

money. I took the money away from them and returned it to Matthews, less the thousand dollars. I returned it in the dark and couldn't see him, and I didn't trust him enough to go inside where he could gun me; but I'd give a hundred dollars to have seen his face. He'd just been talking to Slim when I came up to the back door of his saloon. I heard him send Slim into the hills as planned. I guess he still thought he'd pulled the wool over my eyes. The sun gets pretty hot out there—Slim and his two friends will have plenty of sunburn when they get back."

"If Matthews finds out Rogan double-crossed him," Graham said thoughtfully, "I'd hate to think what he'll do. If I was in Slim's place I'd hightail out of these parts."

"Yeah," Larry shrugged, "but he's got it coming to him. I hate a double-crosser worse than poison from a rattler. But if White-Eyes Sanderson hears of that holdup, what he does to Slim Rogan for impersonating him will be worse than anything Matthews can think up. My hope is that Sanderson and his two pals Pet Skink and Blackie Buell have left the country. I advised Buell to that effect when I turned him loose the other night after he tried to kill me."

"And do you think they'll take your advice?"

"I don't know," Larry mused. "It's hard to tell about some men. I scared them out of Texas when I was a Ranger; but it's been my experience that when a man stops running and turns to fight he's twice as dangerous. All I hope is that White-Eyes decided to move on. I'm not exactly afraid of the man, Graham; but I have no hankering to go up against his guns. I tricked him into believing I was chain-lightning with my gun; if he got the idea that my draw was a trick, he'd cross hell and high water to shoot it out with me just for the satisfaction of beating me."

CHUNG LING brought them another cup of coffee. "How much to board my dog, Chung Ling? Do you have any scraps?"

"No sclaps," the Chinese said with finality.

Glenning looked at the last fork full of hash on his plate suspiciously. "What? No scraps?"

"Chinaman eat sclaps," Chung Ling explained.

"Oh," Larry breathed a sigh of relief. "I see; you don't let anything go to waste. Well, how much you charge me to board my dog?"

"Big dog?" Chung Ling held his hands out palms toward each other about three fet apart. "Fifty cents."

"No," Larry said. "Big big dog." He stretched his arms to their full length.

"Big big dog! Ooooooeeeeeeee! Big big dog—one dollar."

"Okeh Chung, a dollar a day to feed my dog; it's a deal." He laughed as the other bowed in acknowledgement, then turned to Graham. "See, what did I tell you? It's going to cost me plenty to feed that dog and stay in the law business."

"It looks like law business coming right now," Graham surmised as he glanced toward the door.

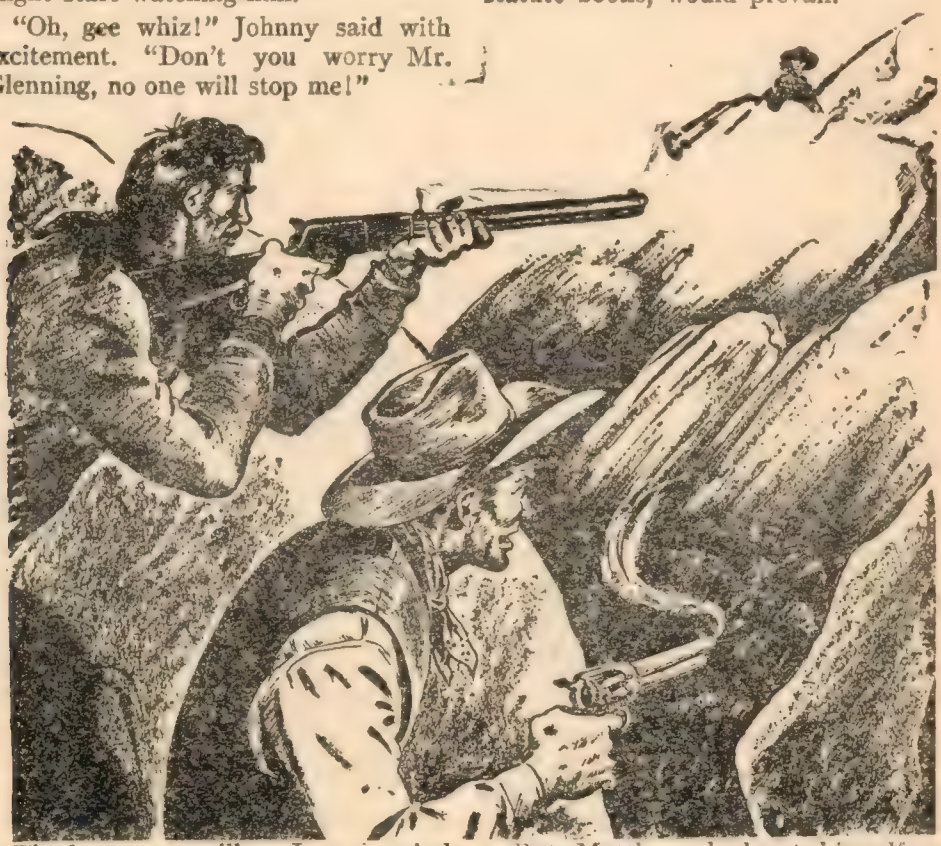
Larry turned to see an excited miner entering. "Come quick, Marshal," he gasped. "Come a runnin'; there's a man up the gulch with his throat cut!"

2

GLENNING arose quickly and flipped a silver dollar on the counter then hesitated indecisively for a moment. "It looks like I'll have to run. As soon as you get through eating Graham, saddle Dandy for me." He fumbled in his shirt pocket and brought out a letter. "Johnny, this is

very important. I want you to slip out quietly and take this letter over to Fort Webster; give it to Captain Donaldson and tell him to please send it out with the first Army mail. It's getting late so you'll have to stay overnight." He gave the boy a five-dollar bill. "Be careful that no one sees you, especially any of Matthews' men. I'd have Graham do it, but I think they might start watching him."

"Oh, gee whiz!" Johnny said with excitement. "Don't you worry Mr. Glenning, no one will stop me!"



The letter was still on Larry's mind as he followed the miner up the street. Only yesterday, he had resolved to write the Governor of Texas, to get his assistance in securing an appointment as U. S. Marshal. He felt that he needed more authority than his present precarious position allowed; his association with, and acceptance of, Matthews' money did not help his reputation in Shack Town; yet his work was the only semblance of law and order in the place. In many towns, he knew, corrupt and dishonest politicians secured the election of officials who did their bidding; but there was at least the farce of a free election, and the people generally abided by that decision. Once the election fever was over, people buried their grudges, shrugged away their distaste, and settled down to passive obedience. Even with corrupt officials, there was some faint hope that the law, as written on the statute books, would prevail.

But Matthews had set himself up like a king and without consideration of anyone but his own selfish interests had said to Cinders: "Here's your badge; you're the marshal of Shack Town." In the shoot-out between Cinders and White-Eyes Sanderson, the town had lost something vital, even though its motive force was dishonest.

Where there is no law or instrument to enforce authority, fear and suspicion enter the hearts of men; it was this condition which had prevent-

Glenning foresaw a battle in the rocks . . .

ed the miners from getting together and setting up a committee and a miner's court—such as prevailed in other similar communities in the west. Because he wanted to control everything, Matthews had kept such organizations from existing or coming into being. All that was needed was a leader in whom the men could place their confidence.

From Cattleman's Association Detective, to Texas Ranger, then into the Territories as a U. S. Marshal was a logical procedure. It was a shame that Glenning hadn't thought of getting lined up before he left Texas, he had thought. All he had thought of was getting away, where he could lick his wounds, so to speak—where he could have a little peace of mind while the disappointments his fellow man had caused him had a chance to heal in his heart. After his resignation from the Rangers, Glenning's life was in danger, for his showdown with the Ballinger Gang had spread his name far and wide in Texas.

A LITTLE group of men were waiting at the jail, held in the street by Joe who stood guard. Fear

plainly marked their faces as Larry approached and they turned to him with suspicion and anger. "I saw you talking to him yesterday," one of the men said sullenly. "We're waiting to see what side you're on, then we're taking this into our hands. If you don't come through we'll hang you along with the murderer."

"My Gawd," Larry gasped in horror. "You don't mean it was Elkins!" He had liked the old man; it had been Elkins who suggested that he might be a U. S. Marshal.

"You're working for Matthews," the man accused, "and everyone knows Matthews is crooked as a dog's hind leg. You're going out after the murderer and we're going with you; if you show the white feather we'll hang you and Matthews too. We'll burn the *Golden Horn* to the ground; we'll—"

"Now wait a minute," Glenning interrupted. "That's no way to look at things. I'm the law here and I intend to work things out in my own way without interference. I've taken Matthews' money in good faith, with a free hand to run this marshal's job the way I see fit. There's no use standing here arguing; let's get on up there and see what we can find out. One of you boys go to the livery stable and bring up my horse; Graham is saddling him now." He whistled to Joe and the dog trotted over beside him and licked his hand. "Come on boys, it looks like we've got work to do!"

●

Elkins was one of the few men who lived close to his claim. Like many a prospector, he had built a lean-to in which he kept his bedding, cooking utensils, tools and personal belongings. As they approached the claim, Joe evidently smelling blood or instinctively sensing death, leaped forward. He was a terrifying beast as he approached the lean-to and approached the blanket-covered form. Every hair on his back stood on end and his eyes shone green as he sniffed, then came outside, raised his snout toward the mid-day sun and howled. A volume of melancholy and despair seemed to be written in that howl; Glenning felt a choking sensation in his throat and a tightness on the scalp of his head as a cold wave of fear rippled up and down his spine. "On guard Joe," he ordered the dog, surprised that his voice did not tremble.

He had been in the presence of death before; he had seen men die, but never before had he wanted to turn and run as he did as he looked at Elkins' bloody features. A numbing sense of shock struck him spellbound. He reeled back involuntarily and stood silently beside the dog outside the lean-to. "Throat cut from ear to ear," he managed huskily. "Nice old gent, too. I talked to him yesterday. Acted rather suspicious and tight lipped at first. Must have had considerable gold hid out. Any of you men know where he might have hid his gold?"

NO ONE spoke, probably realizing the incriminating circumstances an answer would create. "That damn dog howling," one of the men said, "gives me the willies. I can look at a dead man as long as you like but that dog makes it like a funeral or something. Come on, let's get our horses and take out after that cut-throat!"

"Just a minute," Glenning stayed him, "I'll have to take possession of his things. I won't have time to do much, so I'll make one of you responsible."

He gathered everything which might identify the man—his papers, letters, magazines and a few books and put them into a canvas war bag tying the end securely. "I charge you with this responsibility in the name of the law." He handed the bag to one of the more honest-looking of the miners. "I intend to bring in the murderer, and if robbery was the motive I'll bring back

the gold. His family will probably be glad to receive it."

He had already heard about the discovery of the body and could deduce no evidence from it, pointing to the murderer; but there was a suspicion in his mind that it was the work of Pete Skink. It was just such a job as Pete would have done, smooth and sure and deadly. Elkins could not have suffered much, so effective had been the killer's knife; deprived of all blood, the brain lives but a minute and unconsciousness is swift. Glenning had seen that at a glance and that the man had been killed where he lay. "Probably lying there for a mid-day nap," he reflected. "Went to where he hid his gold put some away in his cache, then the killer followed him and slit his throat."

Glenning circled the lean-to in ever-widening circles until he came upon the imprint of a bootheel. "Here, Joe," he called the dog to him, "man gone!" He pointed to the footprint. Joe sniffed and was off on the trail: it would have been easy enough for Glenning to follow, for no effort had been made at concealment. The men followed after them.

They found the cache about a hundred yards away from Elkins' lean-to. It had been well-concealed, but now it was open to the world. Several empty lard cans, with little specks of gold still remaining told the story. Glenning squatted on his heels and studied the lard-cans, "I'm not a mining man, but from the number of cans used I deduce there was a considerable quantity of gold. What would be your guess as to the value of it?"

"Anyhow about twenty thousand," one of the miners responded.

Larry's mind was now working with lightning rapidity. "Twenty thousand! No wonder he was so cagey. That's a heap of gold. About how much would that weigh—that is, in pounds like you'd weigh bacon or sugar?"

There was a thoughtful silence then a grizzled oldster stepped forward. "I calc'late about ninety pounds."

"Hum," Glenning said reflectively. "Add ninety pounds to the weight of a man on a horse that has already been ridden twenty or thirty miles—that's quite a handicap."

THE MAN who had been sent for Glenning's horse rode up and dismounted. He seemed chagrined at having missed something. "Here's your horse marshal," he said. "Rifle's in the boot and Graham put some extra ammunition in the saddle bags."

"Much obliged," Glenning smiled tightly. "Well boys, so long. If I don't come back by day after tomorrow, come a huntin'. In the meantime get your rope limbered up for a hanging!" He swung into the saddle. "Trail him, Joe," he ordered the dog.

"Hey, wait a minute," one of the men shouted. "We're goin' with yuh!"

But Glenning had no intention of taking a posse with him; he had enough to worry about without considering the possibilities of a bullet in the back. Most of the men in the group were honest, but among them were some of the men who did not work hard at their claims. If they caught the murderer and retrieved the gold, another man might die; many men had died for less.

But what I can't figure out, Larry thought, as he galloped along after the dog, *is why Elkins was killed at all. If the murderer wanted the gold, all he would have had to do was to steal it and take off. He must have seen Elkins hide it and knew where the cache was. Why did he follow the old man back to the lean-to and slit his throat?*

ASSUMING that Joe was on the right trail, Larry rode up the gulch and up over the ridge to the broad plateau above toward the west. Perhaps, he reflected, the murderer had believed it would be impossible to pick up his trail, Assuming Pete Skink was the culprit, Glenning was more puzzled than ever; it appeared that

Pete had not tried to conceal his trail. It became evident that this was so as soon as the ground levelled off into the sage of buffalo-grass. Even without the dog, Glenning had no trouble in following the trail but to make sure, Larry dismounted several times and examined the horse tracks carefully so he could identify them later if necessary. "Same tracks all right," he murmured with satisfaction. "Freshly-shod horse with left hind foot turned slightly inward. That's hanging evidence in my book."

He crossed a deep gully as the country became rougher and he began to depend on the dog more and more; but when the land levelled off again the dog began to act strange. He ran in circles and yelped then took the trail again. Glenning called the dog to him and dismounted. "What is it boy?" He asked. "If it's Pete Skink he's acting mighty queer for Pete Skink because no one can cover a trail like Pete; he's part Apache or I miss my guess."

Joe sniffed the ground and wagged his tail, then looked up at Larry and raised his paw as if to shake hands as he had been taught. Glenning scratched the dog behind the ears then hunkered down on his heels and rolled a cigarette. He smoked reflectively for a while a puzzled frown puckering his brows. Joe sniffed the ground and started off at a tangent toward the town. Glenning stepped on his cigarette and leading his horse, followed the dog a few steps. *Must have gone back to town,* he reflected studying the ground. *He's a tricky rascal, all right. Maybe White-Eyes and Blackie Buell are waiting for him back there.*

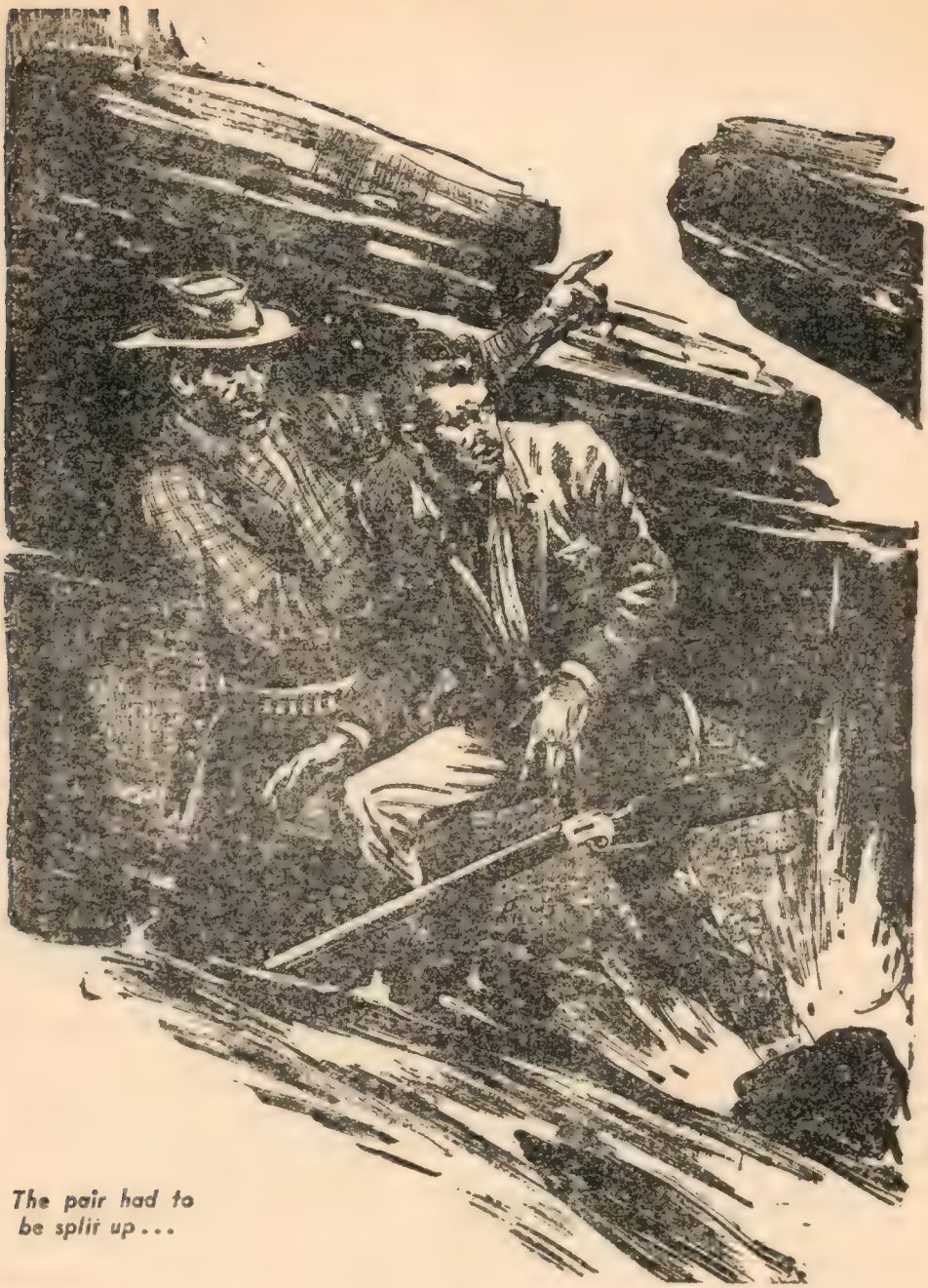
But there was no horse-track pointed toward the town, instead there were three other horse tracks coming *from* the town! Larry stopped cold as the realization of what he might encounter struck him. He recalled Matthews' instruction to Slim Dakin, or Rogan, or whatever his name was that morning. The holdup of the *Golden Horn* had been a scheme to draw Glenning into an ambush at Apache Pass; the trail was plain and easy to follow. So was the trail of Elkins' murderer!

Larry called Joe back and returned to the point where the two trails converged. "Look, Joe," he said to the dog as he selected the horse track with the crooked left hind foot. "This is the one you follow. Stick to it, and don't let nothing get you off the trail. And get a move on, too, because it looks like they're headed for the Apache Pass. If we want to live long and do well, we've got to catch up with Elkins' murderer before he gets to the Pass!"

3

THE SUN slanted toward the west as they proceeded, and where before the four horsemen had crossed each other's trail at intervals, it soon became necessary for them to take the same trail. It was plain that Pete Skink's horse was stepping on the tracks which preceded him. Glenning watched the skyline and cringed mentally at spots which would make a likely place for an ambush. It is one thing to talk big, and pretend that you are not afraid to die, but quite another to face the immediate prospect alone. Larry was afraid, yet he rode on, calculating his chances.

Matthews figured Apache Pass would be a good place for ambush, he reflected. *It looks like White-Eyes will probably figure the same way, especially when he considers the possibility that I'll bring a posse. If the Pass is narrow, one man could hold off twenty for a while and then they could ride on through in the dark. The thing about*



The pair had to be split up . . .

White-Eyes that worries me is that he probably knows how I operate. I've always played a lone hand, and he'll figure I'll do the same now. It's a funny thing, though, that White-Eyes and Matthews would get the same idea at the same time.

Vaguely, at first, then with growing certainty, Glenning's mind began to perceive the reasons for his present predicament. Jethro, who had presumably robbed a train, feared him because he believed Glenning was a Pinkerton detective. Matthews might have come to the same conclusion that Elkins had, and assumed that Glenning

was a U. S. Marshal; that would have accounted for his cagey attempts to get him out of the way. There was no telling what crimes Matthews might have committed, but Larry gave Matthews credit for having more intelligence than to do anything for which the Federal Government would want him. His present system of cleaning out the miners was a quick and sure way to wealth; it was only natural that he would not want a U. S. Marshal around to interfere. To have a Government man killed openly, or do it himself, would preclude his future use of that wealth. His stay in Shack Town was to be only temporary; his plans for the future must surely include much more luxury.

White-Eyes Sanderson, on the other hand, if he suspected Glenning of being a U. S. Marshal, would feel a more pressing need to get rid of him. He might have found out that Buell had told Glenning about robbing the mails in Texas, using the same sort of joke about a rich "Uncle" that White-Eyes himself had used upon his ignorant subordinate. Blackie Buell had tried to be funny, even when his own life might hang by a thread and what he said might hang him. White-Eyes should have known better than to send Buell or Pete after Glenning.

No, White Eyes was not acting natural in this instance, even if he was convinced that Glenning could beat him to the draw. There was enough animal curiosity and animal courage to the man to want to find out just how fast Larry really was. White-Eyes had taken chances like that before, driven by a gunman's vanity, and he had left a bloody trail across the length of Texas. The conviction that, sooner or later, he would be caught and hung—or sent to prison alone would make him run. It must be his fear of the Federal Government and the long arm with which it reached out to bring criminals to justice. Robbing the mails was such a crime, and Larry shuddered a little as he thought of what he would have to do if his appointment should become a reality. "My first job probably would be to go out and bring in White-Eyes Sanderson," he mused. "If White-Eyes knew I had no more authority than Cinders, I'm convinced he would have ridden into town for a showdown. At least it would be better than this; I'd know what to expect and I could get it over with quickly!"

THEY WERE approaching the Pass, now, and not wanting the dog to give away his presence prematurely, Larry called the animal to heel. Joe fell behind Glenning's horse, obediently, and Glenning grinned with satisfaction as he loped along. "Damn dog *is* almost human," he said to himself. "What in hell will I do with him, though, when the shooting starts?"

Then, rounding a bend in the trail he was electrified into instant action. The pass opened ahead of him and on either side were two heaps of rocks. They stood like two small forts on each side of the trail; from the one on his left came a wisp of smoke and he heard the report of a rifle. Scarcely a hundred yards ahead of him rode Pete Skink; but he was not riding now. A bullet had knocked him from the saddle!

Dandy, as if impelled by the will of his master jumped off the trail at the bend and was immediately lost to view from above in the jackpines. Glenning slid from his saddle, looped his reins around the limb of a tree, then jerked his rifle from its scabbard on his saddle. Like hunting Indian he started forward, Joe at his heels. He looked out of his concealment studying the lay of the land. It was then, off to his right that he caught the flash of metal in the sun; it might have been a concho on a man's hat, or just a shiny place on a rifle, but it moved and warned him of danger. Impatiently he turned back. "Damn it Joe," he muttered irritably,

"why do you have to get in my way right at a time like this? Come here, boy; I hate to do it right now when the fun is starting but I'll have to tie you up."

Larry took his saddle-rope and tied the dog. "If I don't come back, old boy," he grinned at the dog, "chew the rope in two and look after yourself."

A puzzled expression in his brown eyes, his brow knitted in thoughtful concentration, alert and carefully, Glenning stalked the prone figure of Pete Skink. He was careful not to expose himself to the view from above on either side.

It's not the nature of ambushers to be alone when they can have company, he reasoned. *Anyhow, not men like Slim. It must have been Slim, thinking Pete was me; White-Eyes Sanderson wouldn't make that mistake. But who the hell is over at that other rock-pile? He had a cold chill rippling up and down his spine, as if even now there were guns from both sides of the Pass pointing at the center of his back. Now this is a good place for an ambush and those rock-piles look down on the trail pretty well. If I were going to ambush a man, it wouldn't make much difference which side of the Pass I was on; but if I were expecting two men, and wanted the first man to come into view and pass on, I'd take this pile over here to the right. The first man could come into view and go on up the trail and when the second man came around the bend I'd let him have it!*

Then it came to him in a flash. *Things don't happen like this in real life,* he argued with himself. *This must be a book I'm reading and got all messed up.* He looked around him vaguely as if wondering if it were all a dream. Everything looked real enough. *It's a double-ambush; White-eyes on one side and Slim Rogan on the other—I'll bet my bottom dollar neither one knows the other is there. I've got to keep them guessing.*

BY NOW he was opposite where Pete Skink lay face upward in the trail. He looked behind him and realized that the trail was not exposed to White-Eyes but might be to Slim and his gunmen. "First thing is to secure the prisoner," he said, "If he ain't dead, I'll have to take him in for hanging. If he is I'll take him for burying; but I can't go back without him!"

He ran out quickly and bent over Pete, raised the man's head and observed the wound across the top of Pete's head. The shocking power of a high-powered rifle could kill a man, or just knock him out, and Glenning had no time to determine which. At that moment a bullet whizzed past his head and slapped into the trees across the trail. Slim had evidently seen him move.

Larry flung himself flat on the ground and brought up his rifle in response to the shot. He fired it three times in the general direction from which the shot had come, then grabbed Pete by his two feet, tucking them

under his arm; half-crouching, half-crawling, he dragged Pete into the concealment of the brush across the trail. It was then that Larry realized that he was exposing himself to the possible gunfire of White-Eyes and Blackie Buell; he whirled and sent two shots in the direction he had seen the gleam of metal in the sun as he rode up. All was silent for a minute.

Glenning removed Pete's belt and secured his hands behind his back. "There Mr. Cut-throat," he said as he gave the leather a last hard jerk to make it tight, "if you ain't dead, that ought to hold you until I get back." He looked around for Pete's gun but could not see it. "Must have fallen out when he fell off his horse."

But now, Slim and his two companions had begun to pepper the trees in which Larry was concealed with bullets, and a vague plan began to take shape in Glenning's mind. Memories of the Civil War were still bright in the minds of the men who had fought in it and Glenning had often listened to them discussing military strategy.

The way to do it, one man had said, *is to split the enemy and lick one part at a time.* Glenning crouched down on one knee and began putting more shells into his rifle. A dancing light came into his brown eyes. "I'll do Grant one better; I'll split the enemy and make them shoot at each other!"

AS YET, the only evidence that White-Eyes Sanderson was anywhere around had been the flash of metal in the sun. Glenning feared a cautious enemy more than a brave one; but most of all he feared the deadly accuracy of Sanderson's guns. If he exposed himself where White-Eyes knew definitely who he was shooting, Shack Town would need a new marshal.

Larry moved up the Pass a short distance, then began to study the lay of the land; he was, he believed, almost directly between the two groups of men and the flame of his old recklessness went through him. Sooner or later he would have to face White-Eyes Sanderson's guns; now was as good a time as any. Perhaps he could find some advantage among the rocks. At least, it might not be a test of speed in drawing his weapon. If possible, he would stay just out of accurate pistol range and make it a duel with rifles. There was a certain amount of luck involved in shooting at a distance...

Slowly and cautiously, Glenning began to circle around behind where he thought White-Eyes and Buell were hidden among the rocks. He had ascended about fifty yards when a rifle bullet whizzed over his head singing a death-knell in double time as it zipped against the rocks. He had exposed himself to the view of those across the canyon; crouching down, Larry whirled and sent a rifle-bullet in the direction from which the shot had come. In reply, two more bullets whizzed dangerously close over his head. "Caught like a rat in a trap," he groaned. "I can't go ahead and I can't back up; in a minute or two, they'll get my range!"

Facing upward again and looking for other concealment than the shallow hole into which he had jumped, Glenning saw a rifle-barrel pointed over the edge of a large rock about a hundred yards above and over to his left; similarly, over to his right—and at about the same elevation—was another rifle. At almost the same time wisps of smoke came from the rifles above him and he ducked, involuntarily; but the bullets were not for him.

"They think I'm Pete Skink," he grinned with satisfaction as he dashed upward and crouched down with his back to a large rock. He could see across the canyon, now, and he saw a man standing beside a large rock—an ominous shadowy form taking careful aim; Larry fired. The man stiffened and pitched forward on his face, the rifle falling from his hands and hurtling down among the rocks almost

like a living thing as shiny spots of metal mirrored the afternoon sun. For a moment lead whistled back and forth across the canyon and the sound of shots echoed and re-echoed from the Pass.

GLENNING believed that if he sat there perfectly still he was relatively safe, but looking slightly into the sun he was at a disadvantage. Across the canyon, objects would be more in shadow than on the side where he was. He believed he saw a movement, then he was sure of it as he saw the flash of a gun. His shot was fired at almost the same time and the bullet from across the canyon was evidently intended for him. It was a little low and slightly to his left. It struck a rock and glanced perilously close to his head. Larry ducked, then saw a movement across the canyon and snapped off a quick shot.

The man must have been hit, because he raised himself up to his full height; then, fully exposed, he began to crawl away. His objective was the larger pile of rocks which seemed to offer a refuge and across the intervening space was a slightly rising grassy knoll. It showed brightly in the sun and the wounded man attempted to crawl upward across this. Larry Glenning covered the man in his sights, started to squeeze the trigger, then relaxed.

"I can't do it," he muttered. "It just don't seem fair to shoot a man who can't shoot back or defend himself."

But Blackie Buell and White-Eyes Sanderson were not of such scruples; two shots rang out and their impact could be plainly seen as they struck the crawling man, stopping him where he was. He twitched and lay still. Glenning shrugged: "That just about whips one side; now for the other. Maybe I can make White-Eyes think Pete Skink doublecrossed him. That's the funny thing about crooks—they can't trust each other. If there's a reward, they might turn traitor to collect it; if they're involved in the crime, they might blab to save their own necks. If Pete is still alive, I might get a case yet. If I can't get a U. S. Marshal's job one way I might get it another. After I've brought in White-Eyes and Buell, and got the evidence on them, maybe my appointment might be more favorable." He thought a moment of Laura and a little glow came into his heart. "A U. S. Marshal's pay might be enough to support a wife. I may not live long—but while I do, I'd sure like to enjoy myself!"

SELECTING a rock which he could identify later, Glenning laid his rifle beside it. Since the shooting would probably be at close range, now, he resolved to use his handier and lighter pistols. Cautiously he began to circle upward, hoping to get behind one of the men. All was quiet now; ominously quiet!

He did not want Buell and White-Eyes to get together again; together

they might stand him off until night, then either make their escape or finish him off. Then, too, there was Pete Skink—either dead or wounded—down there with the knowledge of the gold in his saddlebags and the problem of what to do with the gold. Slim Rogan also might catch up Pete's horse and find out about the gold. It was such a prize as men will die for, and Larry was determined that it should reach its rightful owners. Perhaps Elkins had a wife or some children; he would have to find out about that and see that the man's heirs got their share of the gold.

He was now slightly above where one of the gunmen had been when shooting across the canyon; but now there was no sign of anyone. Remembering that Buell was part Apache, it came to him suddenly that he was up against a master in such a fight as this. He checked his guns with a wary eye, then felt his cartridge belt. Compelled by the urgency of the chase, he had neglected to fill it with cartridges since ordinarily the added weight of the ammunition was irksome.

He felt rather than heard something behind him. "Don't move," came Buell's voice; "drop that gun!"

In spite of the command, Larry turned and dropped his gun when he looked into the bore of Buell's rifle. There was gloating and satisfaction in those beady Apache eyes, and Glenning read murder in that dark face.

But Buell evidently wanted to gloat. Larry could see his finger tightening on the trigger of the rifle; yet there was hesitation. "Let me see you draw the other gun now," Buell taunted; "I want to see how you do it!"

Glenning felt himself stiffen and then, lest he give himself away with a glance of the eye, refused to look at Buell. Instead, he threw his eyes behind the other; Larry could see Buell's uneasiness out of the corner of his eye. Buell stood with his back to a huge rock and no one could get behind him. "Hey Whitey," Buell shouted. "I've got him. It's Larry Glenning and I've got him covered; hurry up, now, so you can see how he makes his draw!"

Glenning threw his glance a little above and behind Buell. "Don't shoot Pete," he advised in a calm voice; "slip the knife into him!"

The gloating faded from Buell's face and in its place was stark fear; but instead of turning around as Glenning had hoped, Buell pressed the trigger. At the same moment, Larry was also moving, flinging himself to the ground on one side and reaching for his gun. Buell had, unfortunately, not counted his bullets; his rifle was empty and the hammer merely clicked down on the firing pin.

Larry was shooting as he fell, expecting the rifle-bullet to cut him down. His shot was a little wild, catching Buell in the fleshy part of his chest a little below his shoulder. Buell dropped his rifle; his hat flew off and he turned and streaked toward the pile of rocks where White-Eyes Sanderson presumably was. Glenning fired over the fleeing man's head twice; but the shots did not stop Buell and he could not shoot a man in the back.

FOR A full minute Glenning lay there, feeling strangely weak from shock and the strain. He wished now that he could just crawl off someplace and rest—give up the fight and never again face outlaws' guns or worry about their misdeeds. The very thought of a lawman's job was suddenly repulsive to him; even the U. S. Marshal's position had lost its glamour. He thought how nice it would be to return to the simple life of the cowboy, tailing some stupid and obstreperous range cow out of the draws, or just jogging along looking to see if everything was going all right. The monotony and the peacefulness seemed good to him now.

But having committed himself to the life of a lawman there was no backing out now. It was either fight or die, the way he saw it, and he was nerving himself for another effort. Even at this moment White-Eyes Sanderson might be stalking him and White-Eyes wouldn't be fool enough to hunt with an empty gun!

Larry raised his head cautiously and looked about in all directions; then he realized why White-Eyes had not come to Buell's aid. White-Eyes had an errand of his own to perform; he was stalking Pete Skink and if those two got together it would be too bad. If White-Eyes suspected Pete of doublecrossing him, he would kill Pete. If Pete had a chance to explain, and White-Eyes learned of the gold, there would be no letup in the fighting. White-Eyes must have seen Pete down below and recognized him; otherwise he would not have left the rock-pile.

Though the distance was great, Glenning elevated his revolver and fired in the direction of White-Eyes, running forward as he did so in order to get closer. The answering whine of a rifle-bullet warned him of the uneven situation; the best he could hope for was to keep White-Eyes from joining Pete. Cautiously, he circled closer, careful not to expose himself too much to that deadly rifle. Once in a while he would catch a glimspe of White-Eyes and would snap off a shot. He hoped that if he could get between White-Eyes and Pete, then White-Eyes would consider the odds too great and leave.

Suddenly White-Eyes was standing out in plain view, his rifle raised. "Stand up like a man Glenning," he shouted, "and stand up shootin'. I'm tired of foolin' around!"

GLENNING felt hot blood surge through his veins and his old recklessness came over him. Here was a game to his own taste; here was the fighting challenge and now he had a chance. White-Eyes was now within pistol range!

Crouching behind his rock Larry took a look at his pistol and a cold fear shot through him. He had fired away his last shot!

"What you waitin' on?" He heard White-Eyes' voice approaching. "Lost your nerve Glenning?"

Larry crouched down and said nothing in return. He knew better than to expose himself to such deadly aim. He wondered how he had let

GET MAD, BUSHER!

He was too easy-going, this Big Jim Honovich, too damned pleasant to everyone. He'd give ground before hostility, rather than make a scene. And this good nature of his was sending him down to the bushes before his diamond day was really over!

by Roe Richmond

leading off the big April issue

SPORTS WINNERS

himself get into such a mess and in his fumbling way he tried to pray.

"Stand up and fight," White-Eyes almost shrieked in his insane fury. "Stand up damn you!" He let go with a bullet which went over Glenning's head a scant two inches. Now, if ever, when White-Eyes levered another shell into his rifle was the time; but Glenning could do nothing but curse his stupidity in shooting away his last bullet.

Glenning's credo of life was very simple. He believed that the Lord gave every man a certain capacity and a job to do. As long as each tried to do that job, the Almighty would help him; but if he tried to do some other job he would fail and be miserable. As for prayers, Larry was not so sure; but the conviction had been growing on him for a long time that the Lord answered prayers in a perfectly natural way, so it turned out to be what some called luck or cleverness on the part of an individual.

Glenning's prayer was answered now from a perfectly natural, but unexpected source; Slim Rogan's rifle was blasting away at White-Eyes Sanderson and Larry, peeping over the rock which concealed him, saw White-Eyes run for cover. Whenever White-Eyes exposed himself, Slim's rifle would search him out and Glenning knew that White-Eyes had given up the fight for the time being. He had no way of knowing what the odds were against him, and when he returned to the rock pile to find Buell wounded that would be enough fighting for today.

Glenning looked up the side of the canyon at where Slim was hidden: "Thanks Slim," he grinned, "you intended to get me, but you just did me a big favor; maybe I can return it." Then he looked upward at the clear blue heaven above him and said nothing.

Careful not to expose himself too much, he began to crawl away from any chance of being seen by Slim on one side and White-Eyes on the other. In the cover of the trees and underbrush he stood up and went in search of Pete Skink; but as he had half-suspected, Pete was gone.

For a few minutes Glenning leaned against a large tree while he rolled and smoked a cigarette, letting his mind wander as he tried to put himself in Pete's place. Off to the right of him and angling toward the rock-pile in which White-Eyes had been concealed, was a ravine cutting a gash up the face of the canyon wall. A trace of a trail used by deer and such skirted this ravine and Larry headed up toward the ravine. In the soft earth of the canyon floor he soon perceived the imprint of boot-heels. He wondered if he could take Pete with an empty gun.

Then, as he followed along a ledge of rock some peculiar instinct compelled him to leap suddenly aside. He was just in time for Pete was upon him like a springing cougar; the sharp blade of Pete's knife grazed his shoulder then they were locked together in the death-struggle. Glenning had but his bare hands for he had no time to pull his gun to use it for a club. His one hope was to seize Pete's wrist and with the power of his fingers cause Pete to drop the knife. Larry managed it, but as he did so he lost his balance. He could see Pete's murderous eyes, and the hate-filled, blood smeared face strain toward him; also, out of the corner of his eye, he thought he saw a movement along the trail up which he had just come. Had White-Eyes circled around behind him?

FOR A split second they were falling through space, then a thousand agonies shot through Glenning's body as he fell against rocks. His head struck a rock; a big red blob shot through his brain, then there was darkness. He realized that he had finally stopped rolling but he seemed paralyzed, his brain unable to work. He strove for control, desperately trying to force his senses

and his perceptions to function. He opened his eyes to see Pete standing over him with the knife, yet he could not move to prevent Pete from slitting his throat. That such was Pete's intent was plain.

A shadow leaped from the rocks and like one at a play, Glenning's heart leaped with joy. Joe, a shadow of fury, a piece of rope dragging, was upon Pete. True to his training he knew how to disarm a man with a stick or a knife; he crunched down with his powerful jaws on Pete's wrist. The knife fell from nerveless hands and then Joe was at Pete's throat. Horrified, Glenning watched as he saw the blood spurt. "Joe! Joe!" He finally managed. "Easy boy; don't kill him!"

Like one in a dream, Larry got to his feet and managed to pull the dog away. Pete lay there among the rocks gasping for breath, his hand going to his torn throat where the teeth of the beast had ripped him. Stark terror had taken the place of murderous hate. "Keep him away, Glenning! Keep him away!"

"One move and I'll let him take you," Larry warned as he quickly plucked some cartridges from Pete's cartridge-belt and loaded his revolver. "I ought to let him chew you up, anyhow, just on general principles, but I'm going to save you for hanging. I saw what you did to Elkins."

"I didn't do it Glenning, I swear to gawd!"

Glenning picked up the knife, slashed off some of the rope which was tied to Joe's collar, and secured Pete's wrists. "As long as you lay still, Joe won't hurt you." He gave the dog a pat on the head. "On guard Boy," he ordered; "and if he tries to get away, chew him up!"

Joe sat on his haunches and watched the writhing and grovelling figure, as Pete pleaded with Larry not to leave him alone. "The beast will kill me Glenning. I'm a lot more valuable to you alive than dead; I know things. You're a U. S. Mar-

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shal and I can tell you things you want to know. Don't leave me here alone with that brute!"

"Don't worry," Glenning smiled as he felt his strength returning though his entire body ached. "I'll be back just as soon as I settle a few things with Slim Rogan!"

SLIM WAS just in the act of looking into the saddle-bags on Pete's horse when Larry got there. "Reach or draw Slim," he said casually as he stepped out of the brush. "I ought to kill you, so I don't care which you do."

Slim Rogan whirled, his hand streaking toward his gun. But as he looked into the black bore of Glenning's weapon, he froze and raised his hands, slowly. "You win Glenning. What are you going to do with me, send me up?"

Glenning took Rogan's gun and thrust it into the waist band of his trousers. "No, Rogan; I could—but I'm not going to. You didn't know it, but a few minutes ago you saved my life; I'm going to tell you something and then give you a chance."

Fear and desperation left Slim's face. "How did you know I'm Rogan?"

"Why, who knows you're Rogan?" Glenning was reluctant to lie even to such a person as Slim.

"Matthews!" Rogan clipped the words out sharply; "I'll kill him if he squealed!"

"You doublecrossed him several times," Glenning reminded. "He got on to you and Jethro and Lanier doublecrossing him; if he told me anything, it was no more than you deserved."

"Mr. Lanier had the money coming to him," Rogan defended. "I was just helping him to get back what Matthews cheated him out of; you can't hold that against me."

"I don't," Glenning grunted, "but Matthews does. The best thing for you to do Slim, is ride on out and never look back. Up in Wyoming is a place called Jackson's Hole; over in the Dakotas are some Bad Lands where peace officers never go; and then up in Montana there's another good place—the Little Rockies. This place here is too hot for you, Slim. Matthews is no fool, and he won't forgive for what you've done to him; White-Eyes Sanderson will find out you are the one who fouled his play today and you know what he did to Cinders. And if you stay I'll have to arrest you. This is between me and you. It's my life against my duty; next time duty will come first. What do you say Slim, is it a deal?"

Slim stuck out his hand and said in a husky voice, "Okeh, Glenning, it's a deal. You're one man I'll never forget. Maybe someday I can even things up. Now, how about giving me back my gun?"

Larry shook Rogan's hand. "Sorry, Slim, I'll give you one of the guns belonging to your two pards; reckon they won't be needing them eh?"

"No," Slim admitted. "They're both dead. But why take my gun?"

"So I can show it to Matthews," Glenning told him frankly. "He'll be some surprised, maybe. Anyhow it won't make much difference to him; he sent you out here hoping you would ambush me. Then, when he found out you had doublecrossed him, he put me wise so I could get you. Does it add up?"

Slim looked puzzled. "I don't get it, though; where does White-Eyes fit into the scheme?"

"He had the same idea," Glenning grinned. "You'll have to admit this is a good place for an ambush." He looked at the surrounding rocks. "It's getting late. Reckon I'd better gather up the odds and ends and head back for town. If you'll give me a hand, I'll tie the two dead ones to their horses and take them back to town for burial."

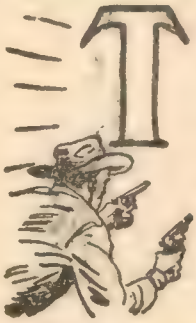
★

GUNS FOR TEXAS

They were riding on the trail of traitors.

By Zella Pearsol

"You're a trouble-maker, Rogers and we can't let you stay in town —even if we do sympathize with you." That was what they told Ferrin Rogers; but now he was back on an important mission, and he'd be raising more trouble—for hidden traitors!



THE COLD, blustery wind, blowing in from the north across the desert and into the lush grasslands of south Texas, seemed to carry with it whisperings of trouble—of revolt. The sighing of the wind through

★★ FEATURE NOVEL OF SINISTER TREASON ★★

the scrub pines seemed to represent great unrest, the unsettled feelings in the hearts of men who were gathered at the Alamo, in San Antonio. From far and near came rumors of the revolt against Mexico. Texas wanted to loose the chains of bondage; Texas wanted to be free!

As Ferrin Rogers spurred his weary mount onward toward San Sebastian he did not notice that the chill, driving wind tugged at his buckskins and brushed his tawny hair back from his stern, wind-reddened face. He had to get to San Sebastian quickly or all this wild ride would be so much wasted effort; he kicked the winded horse again with a spurred boot.

As he came to the top of a slope, the town lay there before him. It still smelled of the newness of fresh-hewn logs, from which the cabins were built; the wind sent spirals of smoke up to him from their chimneys, carrying with it the scent of pine and greasewood.

Ferrin pulled his tired mount to a stop, looked down upon the village, and his wind-roughened mouth tightened in a cynical smile. Sad and bitter were the memories which flooded up within him. San Sebastian . . . Little San Sebastian. It had been five years since he'd seen this settlement—five long, weary years. Those years had changed Texas even as they had changed Rogers; but, as he rode closer to the little log-built town, it seemed as though nothing had changed.

There was the large log building, and at its front hung a crude sign proclaiming it, *General Store, Les Wyatt, Prop.* There was the old corral, from which fresh strings of horses were taken for the stages and express riders as they came this way. As young Rogers' chill blue eyes sought out familiar landmarks, they came to rest upon a road which led out of town, toward the west. Down the trail a couple of miles was a small land-grant; Ferrin hoped to tear down the one-room cabin upon it and build a fine log home.

Then, memory of that day when he'd had to kill a man in self-defense rushed at him, sickened him, and his broad shoulders slumped forward. He had been compelled to shoot a Mexican; the townspeople, fearing trouble with the Mexicans, had told him to leave town. They'd tried to console Rogers with the talk that they *had* to brand him a killer as a protective measure against the Mexicans in the settlement, but they urged him to get out, quick! This, to save their own hides. Ferrin had ridden out of town, vowing never to return.

AS HE RODE along the street now, his long-barreled musket hanging from his saddle-horn, his new Patterson Colts pressing against his sides, all these old things came to life in his mind. And he was still a killer; he rode now on a mission of death. Death to the traitors of Texas!

Ferrin was filled with the urgency to ride on through this accusing village—on to the south where men were gathering, preparing to defend themselves in their stand for freedom. But he must not—not till what he had come here to do had been done; only then would he be free to ride out of here to take sides with that band of men at the Alamo.

Uneasiness filled Rogers. Perhaps even now the things that Sam Houston had forecast had already happened; even now, at the Alamo, guns from the hands of this group of men might be booming out their defiance to the aggressors.

Down past the General Store, Ferrin Rogers rode, then on to the little town's only eating place. He stopped here, smiled wryly; even a killer must eat. He dismounted, climbed down from his mount, secured it to a hitch-rail. Then he noticed the people staring at him curiously. Some of them he knew; some of them were strangers to him. Into the faces of those he knew came surprise, then

coldness; into the new faces was interest, curiosity.

A swarthy-faced Mexican sauntered up to him, his dark eyes hate-filled, his voice cold as he purred, "So, the *Senor* Rogers have come back. It weel be better that you get back up on your *caballo* and ride away queekly. And thees time to come back no more, *Senor*."

"I see you have not forgotten me, Rejino Melendez," Ferrin's voice held contempt. "Am sorry, *amigo*, but I cannot take your advice. In a little while, perhaps...but not now." He turned, walked toward the small eating house.

Ferrin Rogers ate like a famished wolf; he'd had no food since the day before. The scalding coffee filled him with warmth and quieted the turmoil within him. He reached down in his buckskin jacket pocket and brought out a piece of paper. He looked closely at the signature, his brow creased in thought. He did not remember anyone by the name of Tom Corley. Then the importance of the note tugged at him. It read:

> General Sam Houston:
> If you send someone here, and offer me protection, I will tell them who burned the wagon-train near San Sebastian a week ago. I will tell them what was in some of the wagons in that train, too.
> Tom Corley.

His blue eyes cold, his mouth set in a firm line now, Rogers called to the waitress who had brought the food. When she came up to the table, he asked, "Do you know anyone by the name of Tom Corley? Do you know where he lives?"

The girl's eyes widened in surprise. "Why, yes," she answered, rather hesitantly. "My mother took him in when the wagon-train was burned and his parents killed last week. He is a fine boy, but he is still nervous and afraid; are you a relative?"

"No, ma'am, I am no kin. But I am a friend, and I would like to see Tom as soon as possible."

She seemed satisfied with the explanation and pointed to a cabin at the lower end of the street. "It's that one with the fenced-in back yard."

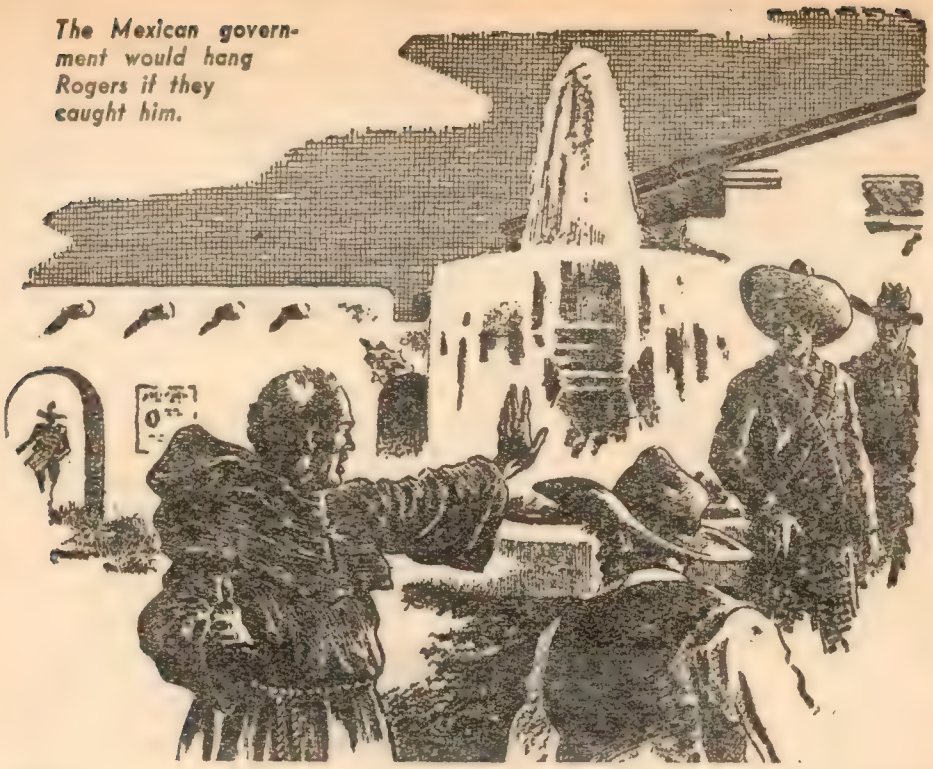
Ferrin Rogers thanked her, asked, "Will you please fix me a package of food to take along." Then he tore the note into tiny bits, walked over to the big, open fireplace, and threw them into the fire. It was very dangerous for Tom Corley, or any other man, to know the contents of the wagons bound for Sam Houston's headquarters. Such knowledge boded ill for the spirit already risen—the spirit that brought whispers from nowhere, to make men's eyes flame with a queer light and to tighten their lips...

YOUNG Rogers walked out into the street again, the sack of food in his hand, and started down toward the cabin where Corley waited. Then he noticed a grey-haired man and a young woman walking toward him. His heart seemed to miss a beat, and his face grew taut; he stood as if turned to stone as they came close now. It was old Ben Coe and his daughter, Jeanie.

Ferrin had been in love with Jeanie and she had promised to marry him; then there had been the trouble in which he had been compelled to shoot a Mexican in self defense. But because the man had been a powerful *politico*, his countrymen had hated Rogers; the Americans hated him, too, because the killing of this *politico* had brought soldiers into San Sebastian. They had ordered him to leave town, but before he rode away he had asked Jeanie to wait for him; she had told him she could never marry a killer.

The girl stopped in front of him now, surprise and gladness in her voice as she exclaimed, "Ferrin! Ferrin Rogers—you've come back! I'm so glad!"

"We'll all be sorry before he's here very long," old Ben prophesied. "There's too much wildness in you,



The Mexican government would hang Rogers if they caught him.

Rogers," he said to Ferrin. "You don't have the restraint of emotions it takes to live here now; it's like living on a keg of dynamite. You should have stayed away. The Mexicans are keyed up, uneasy; we can't have you stirrin' up any more trouble."

"I'll do my best to keep from starting trouble, Coe," Ferrin assured the old man. But his words seemed a mockery. He knew he would cause trouble—he had to! And then this glad light in Jeanie's eyes now would again turn to contempt.

"Let's be goin', Jeanie," Coe ordered.

Ferrin had not spoken to the girl. There was much he had wanted to say, but it seemed as if he could not bring himself to say it. He went back to his horse, mounted, and rode on down the street to where Tom Corley was staying. Behind him, as he rode along, he could feel the eyes of men upon him. He knew they were all afraid that his being here would cause trouble.

As he stopped in front of the cabin, a lanky, brown-eyed boy of about sixteen came to the door. His face was pale and suspicion and fear flooded it as he watched Rogers dismount, come toward him.

"Are you Tom Corley?" Ferrin asked the frightened boy.

The kid looked at Rogers a moment, then nodded.

"I'm Ferrin Rogers, Tom. General Houston got your letter; he sent me to find out what you wanted to tell him."

Tom sighed deeply, and the fear left his face as he led the way into the cabin, pointed to a bench; "Have a seat," he invited. He walked over to the fireplace, leaned up against the mantle, eyed Rogers, his pale face grim.

"Are you ready to talk about it now?" Ferrin asked the boy, sympathy welling up within him at the show of bravery young Tom was making—at the hurt still in his brown

eyes—at the knowledge that this boy was an orphan, now.

"Yep, I'm ready," young Corley assured Rogers. "It happened in the night. There was yells and wild screeches, and it sounded like Injuns. My pap and my maw and me was in th' train. They took us all by surprise and nò one had a chance to get to their guns. The Injuns had guns but they used arrows, too; most of the men were killed quick. They shot my maw, and then pap was killed too."

TOM STOPPED, swallowed hard, his big brown eyes watching Ferrin Rogers closely. He blinked, and a tear rolled slowly down one cheek. He reached up a grubby hand, brushed it away, then straightened his thin shoulders, continued, "Then th' Injuns rode in close and finished off every one in the train with pistols. I had hid out under a wagon; I couldn't fight no more; my gun was empty and I couldn't find no more powder.

"And then they got close enough so that I could hear what they was sayin'. They wasn't Injuns at all; they talked good English. One of 'em was saying that there was ball and powder in a couple of th' wagons, and they were gonna sell it to Santa Ana for a big price. They laughed when they said how surprised General Houston would be when he didn't get it. So that's why I wrote th' letter. I thought Sam Houston oughta know about it."

"You did a fine job," Ferrin assured the boy. "General Houston thinks you are very brave. But about that man you know—" Rogers reminded—"the one you said helped burn the wagon train—who is he? Where did you know him?"

"Well, it was this way—I got a good look at one of 'em in the light of the fire from th' burning wagons. They was all dressed up like Injuns,

but one of 'em pulled off his feather head-dress and then wiped th' paint off his face—said the stuff was making him sweat. The fellow was Dick West and he works in the General Store. I was out here last summer, and saw him there then. Then my maw and pap took me back to Missouri to send me to school. But they was comin' out with th' train and intended to stay this time.

"Him and another one of the murderin' skunks drove off with th' two wagons they said had the powder and ball in 'em. When they all rode off, I slipped into town. I hid out at the edge of town a couple days, then came in to the store. This West gent was there, behind th' counter, so I wrote that note and sent it in by express rider, I just stayed shut up in here, afraid West would find out and come and kill me before I could get this story told. Guess that's about all there is to it," Tom finished, his face drawn, haggard now.

Poor kid, Rogers thought. "The general asked me to tell you he thinks you have done a great thing, Tom," he told the boy. "I think you have done something that will make a lot of us indebted to you for a long time to come."

Tom's brown eyes blazed, and his lips drew down into a straight hard line. "I don't want anybody feeling indebted to me!" he told Ferrin fiercely. "I wrote that letter because I hate the very guts of them stinkin', murderin' coyotes! I want to see 'em all skinned alive for killin' my folks, and I'll go with you now and point that West gent out to you!"

ROGERS stood up, walked over and placed a hand on the boy's shoulder. "I think I know how you feel, Tom," he said soothingly, "and I don't blame you. I appreciate your offer to take me to West, but that is one thing we must not do, yet; through him I might be able to learn who the other killers are.

"That powder and ball was intended for General Houston," Ferrin went on, "for there's going to be a war and he is raising an army. Texas is going to fight for her independence; she is going to fight to rid herself of Santa Ana and his *soldados.* Texas is going to be free!"

"We can't send wagons out with a heavy guard for that would make the *soldados* suspicious. And there are more wagons on the trail now; we have to risk sending them along with a regular train. We have to hurry about this business of finding out who these hombres are who burned the wagon trains before they have a chance to do it again. But we can't risk getting ourselves killed until—"

Tom yelled, pointed to the cabin window. Ferrin Rogers ran out the door, the Patterson Colt pistol in his hand. A man was running around the corner of the cabin. Ferrin shot at him quickly. But the skulker had gotten away.

"It looks like it's too late now, Tom," Ferrin told the boy when he came back into the cabin. "Who was he?"

"I didn't get a look at his face," the kid told Rogers, his voice shrill, his eyes fear-filled again. "I just noticed him standin' there listenin'; I bet he heard every word we said."

"Yes," Ferrin agreed, "I suppose he did hear all we said, and there'll be hell to pay now. Do you have a gun?"

"I got a musket and some powder," Tom told Rogers. "And I'm going to fight with you. I'm going to help free Texas! Let's git goin'. I'll cover you." There was fight and determination, now, in the boy's face, and fire in the depths of his big brown eyes.

Ferrin Rogers patted the boy on his shoulder, smiled grimly as he said, "Texas *will* be free with men and boys like you willing to fight for the freedom!"

Rogers went out the door and walked down toward the center of the town. Little chills coursed up and down his spine in spite of the knowl-

edge that Tom Corley and his musket were covering him. A bushwhack bullet could find its way into his broad back before Tom could locate the ambusher.

On down the street Ferrin marched, his head held high, even though his whole being was filled with the urgency to run. He was in enemy territory, he knew; he could trust no one. But here he had to stay till his mission was completed.

Then he heard Tom Corley's shrill yell, *"Drop, Rogers!"*

Ferrin dropped to one knee, just as the sharp report of a rifle shattered the stillness, and the whistle of the speeding bullet cut the air above his head. A man showed his head and shoulders at a building corner. Rogers' .34 Patterson jumped in his hand, and the man stumbled out into the street. He was holding his left hand up over his chest, but his right hand was hunting for the heavy pistol which swung at his hip.

Tom Corley yelled again, his voice high-pitched, "Look out for him, Rogers! That's Dick West!"

Ferrin Rogers was looking out for him; he had his gun trained on the wounded man who was staggering toward him, his features contorted by hate and pain, his right hand still tugging at the pistol at his hip. Then the gun was out of its holster and the gunman was bringing it to a wavering level with Ferrin Rogers' middle.

Ferrin's pistol barked again; this time Dick West staggered back, dropped his gun and slumped down into the street, surprise and consternation in his widened eyes.

Young Corley was yelling wildly now, exultantly, as he ran down toward Ferrin, his musket in his hands. "That fixed th' murderin' skunk! He'll never burn no more wagon trains! He thought he'd git you; he didn't know you had one of them new-fangled pistols you can shoot without loadin each time!"

2

FERRIN ROGERS silenced Tom Corley with a finger to his lips, "Not so loud, Tom," he warned the boy; we don't want the whole town knowing why I had to kill Dick West! Don't answer any questions, and let me do all the talking." He looked down at the dead gunman his lips curled in contempt.

Ferrin glanced around at the curious and hostile glances of the men who gathered behind him. Ben Coe was in the crowd, as was Les Wyatt, the storekeeper. They stared at the new Patterson Colt pistol in Ferrin's hand, their eyes wide with curiosity.

Wyatt was talking. "How come Dick West was gunnin' for you, Rogers?" he asked, his voice cold. "You always manage to *make* the men you are out to get start the fight, don't you? You made the Mexican fightin' mad, then when he pulled a gun on you you were ready for him; but it was murder, nonetheless; and so is this, to my way of thinking. We run you outa town once, for a killin', but it might not go so easy with you this time, unless your excuse is a heap better than th' last one you gave for a killin'."

Rogers laughed harshly, coldly. He didn't dispute the storekeeper's word; there would be little use in reminding him that the Mexican he had killed had tried to buy him as a gunrunner just as he had bought many other men, for even then, there had been rumors of trouble all along the borders, and the Mexicans needed guns and ammunition and men to fight on their side.

"It is you, Wyatt, who had better give a good excuse why you have a murdering bunch of gunmen working for you," Rogers told the storekeeper, contempt in his cold voice. "Do you

expect me to just stand here while a gun-totin' skunk takes careful aim and shoots me through the middle?"

Wyatt's florid face turned still redder, and into his black eyes appeared a burning hate as he faced Ferrin. "We haven't had a killin' since you was run out of this town!" the storekeeper rasped excitedly. "And if West shot at you, he had a good reason to think you'd be after him for somethin'. I've got a right to have anyone working for me that I see fit; and I want to know just why you did kill him, Rogers."

Ferrin could hardly hold back the urge to tell this belligerent and excited man before him the truth about his gunnie, Dick West. But, he reasoned, if it were West who was snooping around the cabin, listening to what he had told Tom Corley, then no one else in San Sebastian would know his mission here. And West was dead.

"Your friend, the killer here," and Rogers pointed to the dead man, "could answer your question better than I could," Ferrin told Wyatt tersely, "Unless, since West was in your employ, you already know yourself."

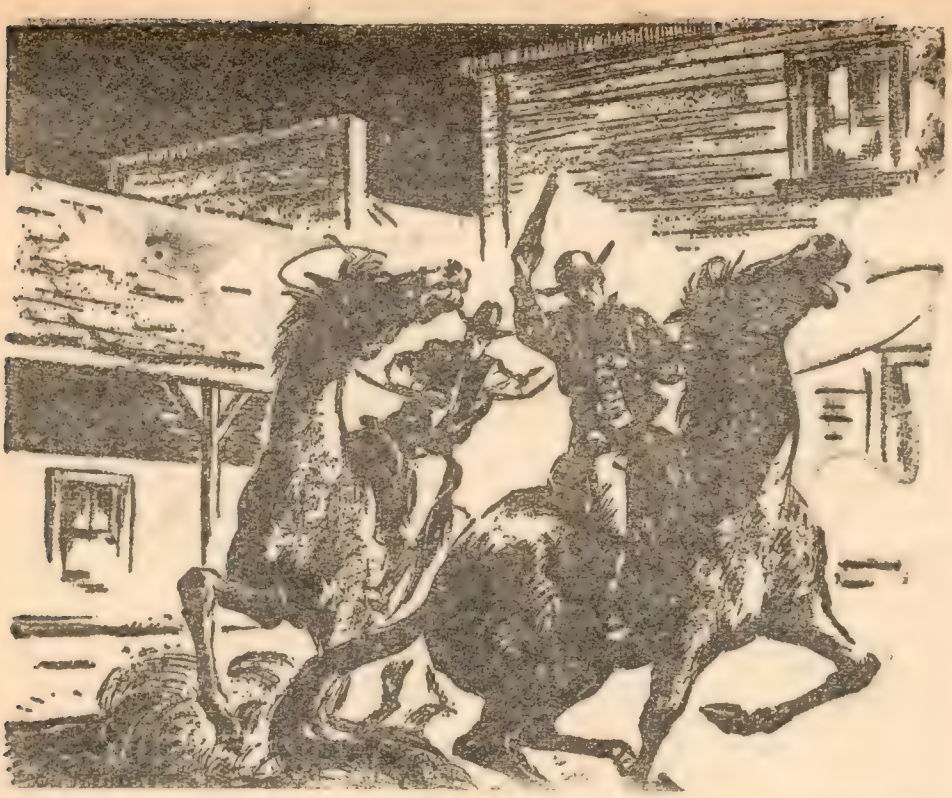
At the implication in Rogers' words, the storekeeper advanced toward Ferrin and raised a clenched fist as if to strike him, his face purple with rage. "Get th' hell out of here, pronto!" the storekeeper raged, "before I forget I'm a law-abidin' citizen, Rogers! We thought we was rid of you once. And I warn you, if you ever show yourself in San Sebastian again, I'll..."

"Renegades will massacre loyal Texans in the towns."

'String the killer up!" someone in the group behind Rogers shouted.

Then a chorus of voices took up the cry, "String him up...string him, I'll..."

FERRIN ROGERS ignored the threat in the voices, looked at Tom Corley, who stood at his side, his young face white, drawn, his eyes filled



with terror. Rogers smiled at him, but the smile was grim as he handed the boy a gold piece, said, "Go quickly and buy yourself a horse. Hurry back; we are taking a ride!"

The boy turned, ran down the street, fear adding speed to his feet. Ferrin stood there, his eyes cold, his mouth firm, heard the muttered threats in the crowd. But no one attempted to make a start toward him. The Mexicans in the crowd were afraid of him and the Texas men did not want to start any acts of violence. He would have to ride out of town, to give these men a chance to cool off.

Then Tom was back, astride a horse. Ferrin moved up to his own mount, swung into the saddle, turned, rode beside Corley back down the street, ignoring the yells of the men behind him.

As he came abreast of the General Store, he noticed Jeanie Doe standing on the porch, her face white, filled with hurt and disappointment. Ferrin rode up close to the porch, leaned down toward her, his voice soft, pleading, as he said, "I'm sorry it had to be this way, Jeanie. I wish I could tell you how it happened, but I can't. Please try to understand and believe in me. I'm going out to my cabin now, but I'll see you again."

Jeanie stared at him, then her eyes filled with tears and she said softly, "Goodbye, Ferrin."

There was finality in her voice, as though she were telling him goodbye forever. The hurt in her voice and in her eyes cut Ferrin to the quick. And because of that hurt, he ground his teeth in rage at the unknown painted men who burned and pillaged wagon trains and killed innocent men, women and children in order to help Santa Ana. He swung the horse back into the street, rode furiously out of town, Tom Curley beside him...

●

Up toward the rolling hills, they rode, the chill wind rushing past their

tense faces, carried the scent of cedar, filled Ferrin Rogers with a nostalgic feeling so intense that it sickened him. How he longed to settle here, to ask Jeanie to come with him to this little log cabin, which just now came into his sight at the foot of a hill.

He spurred his horse forward, rode swiftly up to the cabin door, the boy behind him. In the gathering dusk they dismounted, went inside. Ferrin gasped at the condition of the place; it had been ransacked of everything but the bare, crude bed, table and chairs.

He built a fire in the stone fireplace from a stack of wood on the hearth. At his suggestion, Tom went out and unsaddled their weary mounts.

The light from the open fire cast flickering shadows upon the log walls, brought back Ferrin's dreams of a home with Jeanie again. But this could never be until Texas was free, for he was bound now in the services for the faction which worked for her freedom. This duty would have to come before love or a home.

Then there was the mutter of hoofbeats. Tom Corley rushed inside the cabin, whispered excitedly, "Some one's comin'?"

FERRIN grabbed his musket, slipped out into the darkness. The hoofbeats thundered closer, then a horse sped into view and was pulled to a quick stop at the cabin door. A woman slid from the saddle, started toward the door. Rogers gasped, stepped out to meet her. "Jeanie!" he exclaimed, "why are you here?"

Jeanie threw herself into Ferrin's arms, clung to him, cried, "Oh, Ferrin! I thought I could put you out of my life, but I can't. I love you. But, for my sake, get on your horse and ride. Quickly! A mob has formed to run you out of the country again. They are on the way here now. And when they see you, they might not just stop at running you away again. Some of the men are making threats. A man heard you tell me you were coming out to your cabin. Please go at once!"

Rogers held her close to him, thinking bitterly that this may be the last time he would ever hold her in his arms. He looked down at her tear-stained face, and the knowledge that he would have to hurt Jeanie still more made his misery almost unendurable.

"Jeanie," he finally said softly, "I can't run away this time, nor can I be driven away. I have to find a way to stay here until I fulfill my mission; it is my duty to stay here. Try to understand."

"But I don't understand, Ferrin!" Jeanie exclaimed, pulling away from the circle of his arms. "What duty would be more pressing than for you to help keep the peace in San Sebastian? Can't you understand, Ferrin, that the Mexicans hate you for killing their friend and countrymen, the *politico,* and we have to try and live peaceably with them here? We cannot do that unless our men make good their threat to make you leave town never to return!"

For a moment Ferrin was stunned. He could hardly believe what his ears heard. Jeanie—who had just told him she loved him—that she could not forget him—telling him he should submit to being run out of town like a criminal.

Then the girl was imploring again, "Please leave town, Ferrin, before they run you out. Do it for my sake—if you love me."

Young Rogers smiled bitterly, miserably, "I guess I would do most anything in this world for you, Jeanie, that I could. But not even for you can I leave San Sebastian yet; and I'm not free to explain why I can't, now. You'll just have to trust me."

The stillness of the night was broken by the dull, thunder-like sound of hoofs. It grew in volume—came closer. Ferrin knew it was the posse and he would have to act quickly. He drew Jeanie to him,

kissed her on the lips, then pushed her from him. "Ride, Jeanie!" he urged; "don't let them find you here!"

The girl stood away from him, her face cold now, her eyes flashing angrily. "Ferrin Rogers, I think you are the most selfish man I ever knew! And I don't trust you—never will. I hope I never see you again!" She ran to her horse, mounted and rode furiously off into the night.

FERRIN stood as if turned to stone, passed a hand across his forehead as if to clear his mind of the confusion—of the things that Jeanie had just said.

Tom Corley ran out of the door, his musket in his hands. "I couldn't help hearing what the girl said, Rogers. And I hear the posse. Are we going to try and stand 'em off?" There was eagerness in his voice.

"No, we don't stand them off; we wouldn't have a chance against them," Ferrin told the boy. "They think I am a killer and a trouble-maker. We'll hide out till they cool off some. Let's ride for the hills!"

They swung into their saddle, raced for the cover of the tree-studded hills before the moonlight could disclose them to the posse. But they were too late; guns boomed behind them and bullets whizzed by into the night. Then Rogers gritted his teeth in pain as a bullet seared his left arm. He wondered why these men were shooting at him; wondered if Wyatt intended to try to kill him because he suspected that Rogers knew too much about Dick West. Was old Coe riding with the posse? Ferrin's thoughts were a torment as he hoped he would not have to fight the father of the girl he still loved. He hoped his duty to General Houston and to Texas would not compel him to do that...

The pounding hoofs of Tom Corley's horse faltered, stumbled on the rock-strewn ground. The boy sailed over the horse's head, landed heavily on the ground. Ferrin jerked his mount around, leveled his musket at the oncoming posse and fired. The men pulled their horses up, scattered, but continued to shoot, the spurts of fire from the guns pinpointing the night. Rogers jumped from his horse, ran to the kid. Tom was sitting up, rubbing his head dazedly; his horse lay beside him, dead, killed by a stray bullet.

The posse raced forward then, their yells and curses intermingling with the fierce pound of the spurred horses' hoofs. Rogers' Patterson Colts filled his hands now, and he shot viciously out into that thundering black mass.

The riders were surprised by the suddenness of the attack. Their mounts reared up, snorted in terror, and one of them screamed in pain as a bullet from one of Ferrin's guns found a vital spot. The riders scattered then.

In that brief pause, Rogers helped Corley to his feet, concern in his voice as he asked, "You able to ride Tom? We've got to clear out of here while those men are milling around out there!"

"You're durn tootin' I can ride!" Tom tried to put conviction in his trembling voice, and to take the shake out of his legs. "Give me my musket, and I'll show them backshootin' riders a thing or two!"

"Get on that horse behind me!" Ferrin ordered, as he handed Tom his gun, swung into the saddle, "we've got no time to stick around here and do any arguing with those *hombres*. We're riding again—like the devil was after us!"

THEY RACED the burdened mount toward the scrub pines on the hills. The posse thundered toward them again, and the air was split with their vicious gun blasts. They drew closer to the fleeing horsemen. Tom Corley blazed, "Them dirty murderin' coyotes!" His young voice was husky with hate.

Then they gained the shelter of the

tree-covered slope, rode into the welcome denseness, and Ferrin drew his winded horse to a halt. He turned in his saddle, listened. It was strangely quiet now, except for the dull, muttering sounds of retreating hoof-beats. The posse was going back!

"I wonder," he said to young Corley, puzzlement in his voice, "if they *were* just trying to run me out of town; they were shooting at us as if they were trying to *kill* us." He pressed a hand to the bullet-crease in his arm, felt the wet, sticky sleeve, adhesed to the surface wound. "It's not their fault that they didn't kill me," he finished grimly...

Rogers, with Tom Corley clinging to his back, rode on through the trees, up over the hill, to come out into a clearing just as dawn crept up over the rim of the distant peaks. Ferrin pulled the horse up, looked in astonishment at a small group of horsemen who were coming toward them. They rode steadily forward, their muskets held across their saddlehorns, but they made no move to shoot.

His mouth grim, his eyes cold, Ferrin rode out to meet them, conscious of the gasp of surprise and fear from the lad who rode behind him. He reached back, patted Tom Corley on the leg, "Steady, boy," he admonished softly.

Ferrin could see the flat-topped hats of the riders as he came closer. Their eyes were cold, hostile, as they looked at the two riders. Then one of the men held up a hand and the horsemen pulled their mounts to a stop in front of Rogers.

"We didn't join up with the posse, Rogers," the spokesman said firmly, "for we are law-abiding citizens and don't aim to be mixed up in any killings if we can help it. We rode around this way to head you off and to warn you. We don't like to take sides, but you did kill a Mexican several years ago, and you killed Dick West today. So there is nothing left to do but our duty. Now, unless you do ride away and never show your face around here again, we will be compelled to see to it that you are not *able* to stir up any more trouble! We aim to see you get started right now, Rogers. Git going, or take the consequences!"

There was no compromise in their stern, weather-tanned faces; these big-hatted Texas pioneers would do exactly as they said they would do. This, Rogers knew as he looked into the steady eyes that bored into his. Yet he didn't want to run; he couldn't run. Nor could he put young Tom Corley in a spot where he might get shot, or strung up along with him.

Finally he shrugged, turned bitter eyes upon the group of men, wished he could tell them why he was really here. But he dared not. "I will go," Ferrin agreed, "but Tom Corley here," and he pointed to the rider at his back, "will have to have a mount. We can't ride double any farther. My horse is ready to drop in his tracks."

The spokesman of the group turned to a rider beside him, "Let the kid have your horse," he ordered; "you can ride up behind me."

The rider turned sullen eyes upon Tom, but dismounted. Tom slipped from behind Ferrin, and vaulted into the saddle of his new mount, his brown eyes flashing hate at the group of cold-visaged men before him.

Without another word, Ferrin Rogers and the boy turned their horses, rode southward, Tom muttering under his breath in futile rage; Rogers staring straight ahead, defeat and bitterness etched deep in his weather-roughened face...

3

AS HE RODE beside the boy through the cool spring morning, Ferrin Rogers' thoughts turned toward the Alamo and the little mission-town in which it stood. Many of his friends were gathering there now to fight for the freedom which Ferrin was trying to protect. Colonel Travis was in command of the few troups stationed there. With him were Davey Crocket and his Tennessee comrades; James Bonham and Bowie; all fearless fighters. Ferrin felt a thrill of pride in the knowledge that, with these men, and others like them, fighting for a cause it would not be lost.

He didn't know, as he rode along, that these brave men had already been slaughtered at the Alamo.

Then Ferrin pulled his horse to a quick stop. A rider, bent low over his saddle, was thundering toward him. The horseman sighted Ferrin and Tom Corley, and a hoarse yell burst from his lips.

"Turn about, men!" he shrilled, as he jerked his jaded mount up short. "Go back to San Sebastian—get all the men you can muster and ride south! Santa Ana has murdered all the men at the Alamo and four hundred at Goliad! General Houston is retreating; he needs men and muskets. Ride, men, ride!" He spurred his horse, raced on down the trail.

The import of the rider's words seemed just then to sink in to Ferrin Rogers' tired brain. He pulled his horse up, put out a hand for the kid to stop, the shock of what the messenger had told him chilling him, the muscles in his bronzed face growing taut. All the men—his best friends—murdered at the Alamo! Sam Houston retreating! Fighting pioneers killed at Goliad!

"Come on, Tom!" he yelled at the boy as he whirled his horse. "We've got to get that wagon-train through! General Houston will need the guns and ammunition in those wagons. Follow me!"

They raced on, the spring wind turning cold now, as a norther swept in from the panhandle of Texas, plastered their buckskin jackets to their chests, chilled them to the bone. Then the night closed in about them, the boy riding tense, fearful, in his saddle, the pangs of hunger making him weak, sick.

Ferrin pulled his weary, saddle-sore mount into the shelter of a clump of mesquite trees, slid from his horse, Tom close behind him, his musket clutched in his chilled, blue fingers. "We'll rest the horses here tonight, Tom," he told the tense-faced boy, "And try to catch a few winks ourselves. We'll light out of here with the dawn."

Tom nodded, tethered his horse to a scrub pine, then fell to the ground beside the tiny camp fire which Ferrin had just started. He snatched hungrily at the cold biscuit and meat Rogers handed him from the sack the girl in San Sebastian had given him. His hunger appeased, he closed his eyes and in brief seconds was fast asleep.

●

AS THE FIRST streaks of dawn crept up over the hills, Ferrin Rogers shook the exhausted boy. "Wake up, Tom!" he urged; "we have to find that wagon-train today!"

At those words young Corley's eyes flashed open. He scrambled to his feet, found his horse, vaulted into the saddle, his brown eyes fire-filled, bright, his lips pressed together in a grim line. Then Ferrin was in the saddle, and they raced away, the wind

whipping at them as they rode.

Just as the sun was directly over head, the riders sighted a long, crawling object in the distance which was slowly moving along the valley floor below them. Then, as they rode furiously closer, Tom yelled, "Look Rogers! Th' wagon-train!"

As they neared the train, Ferrin could see that they had slowed to a stop. The lead wagon had broken down in the trail. He and young Corley rode up ahead to the front of the train, and Ferrin addressed one of the men who were trying to repair the crippled wagon. "Who is in charge of this train?" he asked, urgency in his voice. "Who is responsible for the wagons going to General Houston?"

The man eyed him suspiciously, bristled, reached for a musket which rested against a rock at the side of the trail. "Just who in tarnation wants to know?" he growled, as he pointed the musket up to cover the riders. "Explain yourself, stranger, and be quick about it!"

Ferrin ignored the threat of the musket, rode closer, "All the men at the Alamo have been slaughtered," he rasped, "and four hundred more killed by Santa Ana at Goliad! War has been declared! Unload this wagon and get it off the trail. Don't take time to fix it; rush General Houston's wagons through if you have to leave every other one sitting right here. Get movin'—and don't let hell or high water stop you till you reach him!"

The men stopped as though turned to stone. Shock, and disbelief filled their tired faces, but as they looked at Ferrin and the boy, at the dirty buckskins, at their weary faces, at the grim looks in their eyes, they came alive. They yelled, cursed, and swung the big wagon out of the trail, not stopping to unload it. They ran back, jumped into the wagons in the train, started them on down the trail, Corley and Rogers swinging their mounts in beside them.

A surge of triumph filled Rogers, then; he had been in time. But he felt pity for the women, white faces fear-filled, who sat beside their men in the wagon seats, some with babies clutched in their arms.

A horseman rode forward from the back of the wagon train, yelled, "What th' hell's th' rush?" Then he saw Rogers, pulled his horse up, surprise and chagrin on his bewhiskered face. "What you doin' out this a-way?" he asked hoarsely, his eyes narrowing, his hand tightening on the musket across his saddle horn. "I thought you was bein' run out o' this country."

FERRIN looked at the belligerent rider before him. It was Joe Harding! He was a friend of Wyatt, and he'd never been popular in San Sebastian. Folks said he was too ready with his gun, but they'd seemed afraid to try to do anything about it. He'd been a friend of Dick West, too, and Ferrin had had to kill West. A chill of warning shot through Rogers. What was he doing up here with this wagon train?

"I'm asking the same thing of you, Harding," Ferrin told the rider, his voice cold, his eyes filled with suspicion. "Just what are you doing up here with this wagon train?"

"It's none of your business, Rogers," Harding rasped, "but I just happened to be up this way, and seen the broken down wagon. Thought I'd offer my help. But since you're here," he finished sarcastically, "and seem to be ridin' herd on this outfit, I reckon they don't need me!" He turned his mount and galloped off down the trail toward San Sebastian...

Young Corley swung his horse in beside Rogers. "I have a feeling that mean-lookin' gent is up to something, Rogers," he said, as his eyes followed the retreating rider.

"And I have the same feeling, Tom," Ferrin told the boy, uneasiness in his eyes as he looked down the trail at the fast-traveling Harding.

"I think we just got here in time to save this wagon-train—unless that hombre, riding yonder, can get another band of his painted killers together again and come back. We've got to work quick!"

Ferrin urged his horse forward, rode to the lead wagon. "Ride like all the devils in Hell were at your back!" he told the driver. "I think that tough-looking gent who just rode off down the trail is a traitor! I think he is in with the gang that burned the other wagon-train and killed all the people in it. They made off with two of the wagons that were loaded with powder and ball and sold 'em to Santa Ana. I'm going back to San Sebastian and try to stop them from getting out to this one!"

4

FERRIN ROGERS swung his trail-weary horse about, followed by the slack-shouldered kid who rode behind him like an automaton, his red-rimmed eyes staring straight ahead. Behind them the sound of the deep rumble of heavy wagons, hoof beats, cracking whips and clanking chains, filled them with the urgency for more speed, and they spurred their jaded mounts on toward San Sebastian.

The distant hills grew dim as evening settled over the valley and the chill winds reddened the tired faces of the two riders who were slumped over their saddles, weariness in every line of their bodies. Rogers glanced behind him at the boy then pulled his horse up. Only the courage of youth—and the thought of vengeance for the death of his parents was keeping young Corley in the saddle. He smiled wanly, through wind-raw lips, as he pulled up beside Rogers.

"We'll make for the shelter of those hills, kid," Ferrin told the youth, "and rest for a spell. Our mounts won't last out the trip unless we do. And we could use some rest ourselves."

They reached the fringe of the trees on the hills as darkness descended, flopped from their saddle-sore mounts to the ground, asleep almost instantly.

The early morning sun rays wakened the exhausted sleepers and Rogers sat up, exclaimed, "Hit th' saddle, Tom! We've another day's ride before us!"

As they rode forward toward San Sebastian, Rogers looked at Tom, concern in his eyes; the kid was probably half-starved. They'd have to find food soon if they were to have strength enough to fight. Rage welled up within Ferrin as he thought of the men in San Sebastian who were the cause of this wild ride, of their hunger....

●

It was night again, as the two riders made their way cautiously, slowly, into San Sebastian. Ferrin was filled with the urgency to hurry—to do something quickly. His hunger and his saddle-weary body was forgotten in the thought that, no matter what the cost, that wagon train must get through to General Houston!

Rogers stopped his horse at the General Store, tied the shack-hipped mount to the hitch rail, motioned Tom Corley to come close. "Sit your horse, Tom," he ordered tensely, "wait here. If you hear shootin', ride out of here and hit for the wagon train. They'll take care of you, But tell 'em to keep riding!"

"I ain't ridin' nowheres," said the kid stubbornly, tiredly, "and I don't need anyone to take care of me. I'm stayin' right here with you!" He slid from his horse, tied it to the hitch rail beside Ferrin's.

A feeling of warmth spread through Ferrin at the kid's words. And a

feeling of renewed courage. This was the kind of fighting blood it would take to win Texas her freedom. And win it they would—come hell or high water—or burned wagon-trains!

Ferrin's mouth hardened as he moved up toward the store, young Tom walking stealthily beside him. Rogers' brow creased in puzzlement. War had been declared and yet there was no excitement in this town. There was a lot of good fighting-men here who would be up in arms at the news that Santa Ana had killed the men at the Alamo—at Goliad. Something was wrong.

Why hadn't Joe Harding told the settlers about the war—about the massacre at the Alamo? Was it because he and Les Wyatt wanted it kept quiet till after they could waylay the oncoming wagon-train?

FILLED with apprehension, Ferrin stepped up onto the store porch, young Corley at his back, his musket clutched in his cold, thin fingers. They pushed open the doors of the store, blinked as the lantern lights blinded them for a moment.

As the room cleared, Ferrin looked around him at the men gathered there; all hard-eyed, grim-visaged. They cast quick glances toward Les Wyatt as they recognized Ferrin Rogers and Tom Corley. That glance told Rogers that these were all Wyatt men.

There, among them, stood Joe Harding, the dirt of travel on his worn buckskins, his be-whiskered face still red from the whipping of the cold north wind.

Ferrin looked around the group coldly, walked up, faced Harding. "Why didn't you tell the settlers here in San Sebastian that war was declared—that the men in the Alamo have been slaughtered? They would have been on the road south now if you'd spread the word. But everything here is quiet. Too quiet. I expected to find you here—just like this, Harding!"

Harding looked quickly at Wyatt. He didn't say anything. Wyatt gave him a meaningful glance, then stared at Ferrin Rogers, his eyes cold slits now and in their depths was stark murder.

"It seems to me, Rogers," Wyatt rasped, "that you are taking in too much territory around these parts. Just what are you askin' so many questions for? That's an unhealthy habit, hombre. What's Harding got to do with th' war? Why should he go 'round shoutin' that war has been declared? What're you tryin' to prove?"

The men in the store were talking now, some excitedly, about the war, their voices hoarse, some laughing, as though they'd taken up where they had left off when Rogers and Tom had come in.

Wyatt came from around the counter, took his place at Harding's side. The other men in the room grouped themselves beside the store-keeper. Rogers smiled cynically; here was a cold-eyed bunch of killers if he ever saw one. Then at a gasp behind him, he turned quickly. Tom Corley stood there, his wan face white, his eyes staring in fascination at the men there before him.

He clutched Ferrin's arm, whispered sibilantly, "Them voices! Th' one with that laugh. It's th' Injuns! I'd swear it!"

Ferrin quieted the hate-filled boy with a "Hold it, Tom!" and turned back to Harding, his body tense now, every nerve awake.

"I'll tell you why Harding should have gone around shouting the news of the war," Rogers grated, his eyes flashing, "Because General Houston needs every mother's son who can carry a musket to help free Texas! And because you stand here, like yellow coyotes, and don't spread the word, I know you are all damned traitors! Finding Harding at the wagon-train told me that you didn't want to fight for Texas—that you would

stop that train just as you stopped that other one!"

Every man in the room tensed, their fingers tightening around their muskets, their hips weighted down by their heavy pistols. They were ready to shoot at a word from their leader.

Wyatt was talking again, softly, coldly, "But you'll not live long enough to prove that!"

"By those words you have proven yourself a traitor to Texas and a thief and murderer!" Ferris blazed, throwing caution to the wind. "I may not live long enough to prove it, but I can stop *you* from burning any more wagon-trains and selling the supplies to Santa Ana!"

EVEN AS he spoke, Ferrin knew the words to be futile. What chance would he and the kid beside him have against this ring of cold-eyed killers? He wished that Tom had listened to him and waited outside. It was not right to set the kid up against this gang of traitors. But it was the way Tom had wanted it. Perhaps they could stand these gunmen off long enough to let the wagon-train get through. For, even if it cost their lives, that powder and ball and muskets had to get through to General Houston.

Then Harding's gun was up, pointed at Ferris. Corley's musket boomed out just as the bullet from Harding's gun whizzed past them. Harding crumpled, fell to the floor; Rogers and the boy rushed for the door, and out into the cover of the darkened street.

The gunmen in the store, recovered now from the shock of seeing Harding killed before their eyes, yelled, cursed, and shot wildly out into the street, trying to find Rogers and the boy in the darkness.

Ferrin slipped through the shadows to their horses, Tom close beside him. They vaulted into the saddles, just as Wyatt and his gunnies rushed across the store porch and into the street.

Rogers spurred his mount, yelled to the kid beside him, "We'll have to find cover quick! Wyatt will try to kill us before we can spread the word about the war, or about his men burning the wagon-train!"

Then, up ahead, at the edge of the town, a light flickered in a window. Old Ben Coe's window. Behind the galloping riders now, the sound of hoofs thundered through the night. Wyatt and his gunmen.

"Make for the big cabin where the light is," Rogers cried to the boy, urgency in his voice. "Ben Coe's ranch. He has enough men at his place to fight off Wyatt and his gang."

FERRIN knew he had to get help quickly. There was no time to waste; he *had* to stop at Coe's place. His mount and Tom's were winded. Perhaps he could convince Ben this time, that he was not just trying to stir up trouble—but was fighting for the very life of Texas—in time for Coe's men to help him whip the oncoming killers and ride south to fight for Sam Houston. But he'd have to talk fast!

Rogers raced into the Coe ranchyard, leaped from their horses, rushed upon the porch and into the front door. Jeanie, her eyes wide with surprise, stood in the room. As she recognized Rogers and the boy, her face paled. "What are you doing in this place?" she asked angrily. "How dare you break into my home, Ferrin?"

"Jeanie," Ferrin implored, "you'll have to believe me this time! The same gang of men who murdered this boy's mother and father and burned the wagon-trains are on their way here now to try to kill us. We are the only ones who know it. Ask Tom here; perhaps you'll take *his* word. Get your father's men in here quick! Tell them war has been declared. Santa Ana has killed all the men at the Alamo!"

At those last words, Jeanie's face

sobered, and concern flooded it. "There is no one here but me and father," she told Ferrin. "The men are all out on the range, branding; they won't be back till tomorrow. Father is in bed sick. What shall we do?" she finished plaintively, fearfully.

Rogers thanked the Lord that she had included them all in that last question, and for the concern which now showed in her eyes as she looked up at him. He clasped her quickly to him, then released her, urged fiercely, "Get on a horse, Jeanie, and ride like you've never ridden before! Get help. The kid and I will try to hold the men off that long. Ride!"

Jeanie hesitated, looked toward a closed door to a room from behind which a voice was calling, "Who's out there, Jeanie?" then she ran out the door. As the rumble of hoofs grew closer to the ranch she swung into the saddle, spurred her horse, and raced out the back way and down the trail.

Ferrin rushed into the bedroom, stared down at the wan face of old Ben Coe. Coe raised himself on an elbow, yelled, "What th' hell you doin' in here, Rogers? Get out of my house!" Then he fell back on the bed, groaned, and his eyes flashed fire at Rogers.

"Jim, you'll have to take my word for it that I am Sam Houston's messenger and scout," Ferrin told the old man hurriedly. "I didn't dare tell anyone before, except young Corley; you two are the only ones I have told. But war has been declared and Santa Ana is killing off our men like flies. The Alamo has fallen. There is a wagon-train on its way to Houston now with supplies; there are families in that train, too. But the men who murdered the people in that last train and made off with two of the wagons, are riding into your yard now. They know I have identified these; they'll try to kill us to keep us from telling. They'll do that, and then ride on to to intercept the wagon train!"

Ben Coe raised himself again, looked questioningly at Rogers, then growled, "Why in the hell didn't you tell me you was a messenger for Houston? Do you think I'm a traitor too? My gawd! What can I do now?"

There was a rush of hoofs in the front yard, a hoarse voice was yelling, "Send Rogers out here, Coe, or we'll fire th' house!"

FERRIN rushed to the front door, placed the big pine plank across it into the wood brackets. Young Tom was at the back door, securing it. Then the kid, his face dark with hate and fury, gripped his musket in whitened fingers, came back and stood beside Ferrin. "Th' whole gang of 'em is out there," he said tersely. "We can't whip 'em all."

Rogers placed his hand on the weary kid's shoulder, looked at him sorrowfully. "I'm sorry it had to be this way, Tom," he said huskily. "You can still get out the back way—and hunt the wagon train. I'll hold 'em off as long as I can. I've sent Jeanie for help. I think I can hang on till it comes."

The kid's face whitened, but he gritted his teeth, "I'm not askin' to sneak off like a yellow coward and save my own skin! Mebby they *will* kill me, but I'll take some of them dirty woman-killers with me!" He rushed to a window, before Ferrin could hold him back, stuck the musket through it and fired. A horse squealed in the yard, then there were yells and curses, and shots peppered the outside of the cabin.

Old Ben was yelling. Ferrin ran into the room where he lay. "Hand me a musket, Rogers; I'll shoot some of them traitors if it kills me!" He swung his legs over the bed, got shakily to his feet, placed himself beside a window and gripped the musket in trembling hands.

Ferrin took two pistols from the

rack on the wall and went out to where the kid stood, firing his musket as quickly as he could re-load it. He laid the pistol down beside Tom, motioned to them.

Then that same hoarse voice called out again: "Send Rogers out, Coe! We don't want to do you any harm, but we'll kill th' whole bunch of you if he isn't outside in two minutes!"

There was silence for a moment. Then old Ben's quavering voice cut the stillness, "You and your bunch of killin' traitors can go plumb to hell, Wyatt! Come on in and try to get him—you yellow murderers!"

Rogers smiled grimly at the boy beside him. They both knew that now they would be fighting for their lives, with all the odds against them; but perhaps they'd live long enough to hold these killers off till the wagon-train got through.

Then the riders rushed toward the door, their guns thundering. They were desperate; they knew that if they didn't kill these men in the cabin that the settlers would get them. They shot fiercely, wildly.

FERRIN glanced quickly out into the yard; horses were milling and snorting, and men clambered down from the saddles, guns clenched in their hands, and crept up close to the doors and windows of the cabin.

He shot quickly, and a dark form doubled in the middle, and wilted down to the ground. The mass of men cursed hoarsely, sent bullets at Rogers.

Old Coe's musket jumped in his hand and he slumped to the floor, too weak to reload. He lay there, panting, his face pale, perspiration running down his cheeks. But his eyes held a fighting light and his mouth was set in a grim, determined line.

Tom Corley shot into the mass of humanity there in the dark, and yelled

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exultantly as he looked out, saw the men backing away from the cabin. He ran over to Coe, knelt beside him and reloaded the musket.

Then, it seemed, that it rained fire through the walls. There was a rush at the door, and the men burst through it into the smoke-filled room. Ferrin looked through the gunsmoke, and into the black muzzle of a gun in the hand of Les Wyatt, whose hate-contorted face looked down that gun right at Rogers' middle.

Rogers lurched sidewise as the bullet left Wyatt's gun. Then his twin Patterson Colts were spitting lead into that savage killer in front of him, and into the hard-eyed men behind Wyatt. He gritted his teeth in pain as a bullet found him, knocked his right leg from under him and he sank to the floor. As he fell he saw Corley shooting into the gunmen, then swinging his musket up and around, and into the cursing faces of the men.

The room grew dim in Ferrin's eyes, and the figures before him seemed to weave back and forth in the dark gunsmoke haze. The sound of hoof beats came to his ears just as young Tom yelled, "Ferrin! Get up! Help's a-comin'!" Then the kid yelped in pain as a gun butt in the hands of a killer knocked him to the floor.

Ferrin tried to get up, to reach Corley, but he fell back to the floor, darkness closing in about him...

●

Ferrin Rogers opened his eyes to find the room filled with brightness and the sun shining across the bed in which he lay. He looked around the room and his eyes rested upon the figure on the cot across the room from him. It was Corley, a bandage about his head. Ferrin tried to move his wounded leg, but it was bandaged and heavy. There was a bandage about his left arm.

Jeanie Coe came into the room, old Ben hobbling along behind her. She came over to the bed, put a cool hand upon Ferrin's brow, smiled down into his unbelieving eyes. "I'm glad you are awake at last," she said softly. "You've had a bad time. And Tom here," she pointed to the boy on the cot, "was knocked out when we got here. He had a nasty scalp-wound, but he will be fine now."

Tom Corley grinned at Ferrin and rubbed his head. There was something prideful in the way he moved his thin hand back and forth across that bandage.

"I know you will be glad to know that Wyatt and most of the other killers were shot," Jeanie continued, "and what few were alive are in jail; they'll be tried and hanged. The wagon-train got through, and most of the men in town are headed south to join General Houston. You and Tom here are heroes in the town." She smiled down at Ferrin, then impulsively stooped down and kissed him.

Young Tom snickered, and old Ben coughed, turned and shuffled out of the room, but not before he had met Ferrin's in a look that told him Coe was his friend. Then Tom sobered looked at Ferrin. "We sure whipped 'em, didn't we, Rogers?" he asked anxiously.

"Yes, we whipped them good and proper, Tom," Ferrin assured the boy.

Yes, they had whipped the wagon-burners, the killers of women and children. An old man, a young boy, and himself; they'd held the gang of gunmen off till help arrived. Ferrin smiled softly up into Jeanie's eyes, then at Tom. Men were riding furiously south to join Sam Houston and his stout-hearted fighters. The big-wheeled wagons had lumbered forward with ball and powder. Liberators all—of Texas!.

Ferrin Rogers closed his tired eyes, smiled, and slept...

★

The Romance of Hell's Bend

Just Holloway was bullheaded enough, and he seemed to be hellbent on running out this new schoolteacher. But things weren't as they seemed . . .

By Ben Smith

LOOSY looked at the poster a long time. There were big red letters across the top, fine black print underneath. But Loosy couldn't read. After awhile, he said, "It's pretty. What is it?"

Cap leaned across his saddle and squirted tobacco juice at an ambulatory beetle. "Looks," he said, "like Hell's Bend is in for some excitement."

The poster had been fastened near the crotch of a dead cottonwood. One corner, where the big-headed bill-poster tack had worked loose, flapped in the wind. There's always wind in Hell's Bend. It's in Texas, right where the Rio Grande takes a turn on itself, like a snake with a stomach-ache.

There's nothing much there, except for some sand and rocks, the cottonwoods, and a wide spot in the road where two steers came together. Hell's

Bend. A general store and post-office combined. Maybe fifty shacks, occupied in the main by Mexicans who were too tired to move away after the Border Wars. Lately, something new had been added. There was a schoolhouse. There was even optimistic talk of the day when everyone in Texas would be able to read and write...

"This pilgrim claims he's got some sort of machine that talks," Cap explained. "A typewriter. He's Professor Xephelon Jones. And, he'll be at the schoolhouse next week. Satisfied?"

Riding on toward Hell's Bend, Loosy chewed over the situation. Loosy was tall; when he sat in the average chair his knees were under his chin. When he stood up, his chin was hanging over the rafters of the bunkhouse. Well, it was a low-ceilinged bunkhouse. Loosy was at home on a horse, though. He could, by bending, keep his feet from dragging the ground. He had a face that looked like a frustrated prune and an Indian Mound of a stomach.

Cap had been a private, during the Border Wars, thus, through the years since he had risen in rank. Each time he told the tale of the siege of Matamoras, it became bloodier, his own part more important. Finally, when General Zachary Taylor had, in Cap's opinion, been demoted to a sort of general errand-boy in the fracas, the situation had reached a state of constant flux.

"What'll the Boss say?"

Cap grunted. "About what?"

"Usin' the schoohouse."

"Just because he's on the schoolboard don't mean he's agin' progress, Loosy. Just look. Ain't we got runnin' water at the ranch. Just so's that boy of his can take baths! I'm asking you, did you ever hear of a worse waste of clean water?"

CAP WORRIED his chew into the other cheek. He looked like a squirrel with the toothache. They were riding into the outer fringe of Hell's Bend, past the dilapidated Mex shacks. They could smell the sour ground, enameled by generations of dirty dishwater. Outdoor plumbing. Tortillas in cold grease.

Loosy looked at Cap, blinking his watery eyes. "Yeah. But, you know the howl he raised when the rest of them voted for a female schoolteacher. It was enough to burn the sagegrass off the bank of the river. Ain't that progress?"

"Might be, of a sort. But, Just ain't opposed to women account they're schoolteachers. It's account they're women. You know how long Herbie's mom stayed out here with him and Just. Then, when she run off, Just was mad enough to kill her. But, now, since she's dead, you might say he's cankered up inside, Loosy. He hates them all."

"Natural, I guess," Loosy agreed. "I ain't never been married but once. Then, I had to get rid of her 'cause she snored, and twitched in her sleep like a rabbit-runnin' hound. That's what was the worst, Cap, that twitchin'. It was like she was sleepin' in long underwear."

He paused, reflectively. "Maybe," he said, finally, "the twitchin' wasn't so bad, after all."

"Hey," Cap said, "Look."

"Where?"

"Comin' out of the store, there."

"Jiminy Christmas!"

"Yeah. It's Herbie, Loosy. And, he's with Miss Purdue. Just'll have the skin off him for that. Hangin' around the teacher when it ain't schooltime. Maybe we better get him."

Loosy grinned, feebly. "Then *she'll* be mad at us. We don't want her mad at us, Cap. And, she made doughnuts, once, remember? And, she can sing. I'd rather hear her sing than listen to the beller of the prettiest whiteface in Texas. Leave 'em alone, Cap."

"It's my duty, Loosy. None of us Brogans ever turned our face to duty. Like at Matamoras..."

A deputation would call on the schoolteacher and invite her to leave town . . .

"Your duty just turned its face to you, Cap. There's Just. And, he's hotter'n a prairie jack in a grass fire. Me and you just better get a bucket of water 'cause there's sparks."

But, they were near enough to hear voices. Just's, coldly incisive. Mary Purdue's, soft, protesting. Herbie's shrill. Riding up close, Cap and Loosy watched. If Just Holloway knew they were near, he gave no sign. He was facing Mary Purdue, his lean face dark with anger, black eyes snapping. The woman was regarding him cooly, but a banner of freckles were in sharp relief across the bridge of her nose. As for Herbie, he stood miserably by, his twelve-year-old mind not comprehending. He was stubbing the toe of his boot into the dust.

JUST WAS tall, over six feet, and he loomed over the diminutive schoolteacher like the Colossus over a pygmy. She had to tilt her head to see his face, a definite disadvantage in the

verbal exchange. Cap was sorry for her, standing there, catching hell for doing nothing. But, Just was the boss. He owned the Bar H. Cap and Loosy only worked there. And, if the Bar H owner hated women, all women, what business was it of his hired hands.

"I only had one vote," Just was saying, tight-voiced. "I couldn't keep you out of the job. Not with the rest of the jugheads pulling for you. But I can keep Herbie away from you after school hours. No law says I can't..."

"No, Mister Holloway," she said, quietly, "there's no law."

Just went on, disregarding the interruption. Herbie shifted his feet, kicking up dust. He rubbed one eye with a grubby hand, leaving a smear of dirt across his cheek. "Whatever trouble is caused, a woman caused it. I don't want Herbie to grow up and take the licking I took."

Just was angry, but the old hurt-lines were prominent around his eyes. He was remembering. Thinking of the loneliness of the empty mornings, the awesome bigness of the still Texas nights. And, of a boy who was growing up along with the lizards and the rocks and the sand. Just could never correct Herbie's loss, but he could make it up to him. They didn't need a woman's hand at the Bar-H, nor in Hell's Bend.

Mary Purdue waited for Just to run down. Several of the townspeople, mainly Mexican, were regarding them curiously from the wide, board sidewalk. She was losing face, and badly, before the very ones over whom she must maintain some sort of authority.

"You're quite pig-headed, aren't you, Mister Holloway?" She was still calm, despite the anger hidden deep in her eyes. "Have you ever stopped to think that all people are not alike? Are all the men you know exactly the same? Are they all good men?"

"Well, no..."

"And, have you ever wondered just what your son would do in the world? He's twelve years old, yet he can't spell. He reads very little. Is that the way you want him?"

"I can teach him, myself..."

"Yes, you can teach him. You can train him to avoid the coiled rattlesnake. Upon which hip to brand a steer. How to earmark one. Even ride a horse. But, other than that...."

She spread her hands in a hopeless gesture, half turned away.

Just's hand was a hard vise on her arm. "What's better than that?" he asked hotly. "What more does a man have to know to live?"

She shrugged, dejectedly. "Not much, Mister Holloway. Not here. But, perhaps, he won't stay here. I was born on a ranch, too. Lived there until I was older than Herbie. But, I didn't stay. I wanted something more than empty dawns and empty nights. The smell of burning hair at roundup. Calves bawling into the darkness. Yes, I wanted something more than that. I got it."

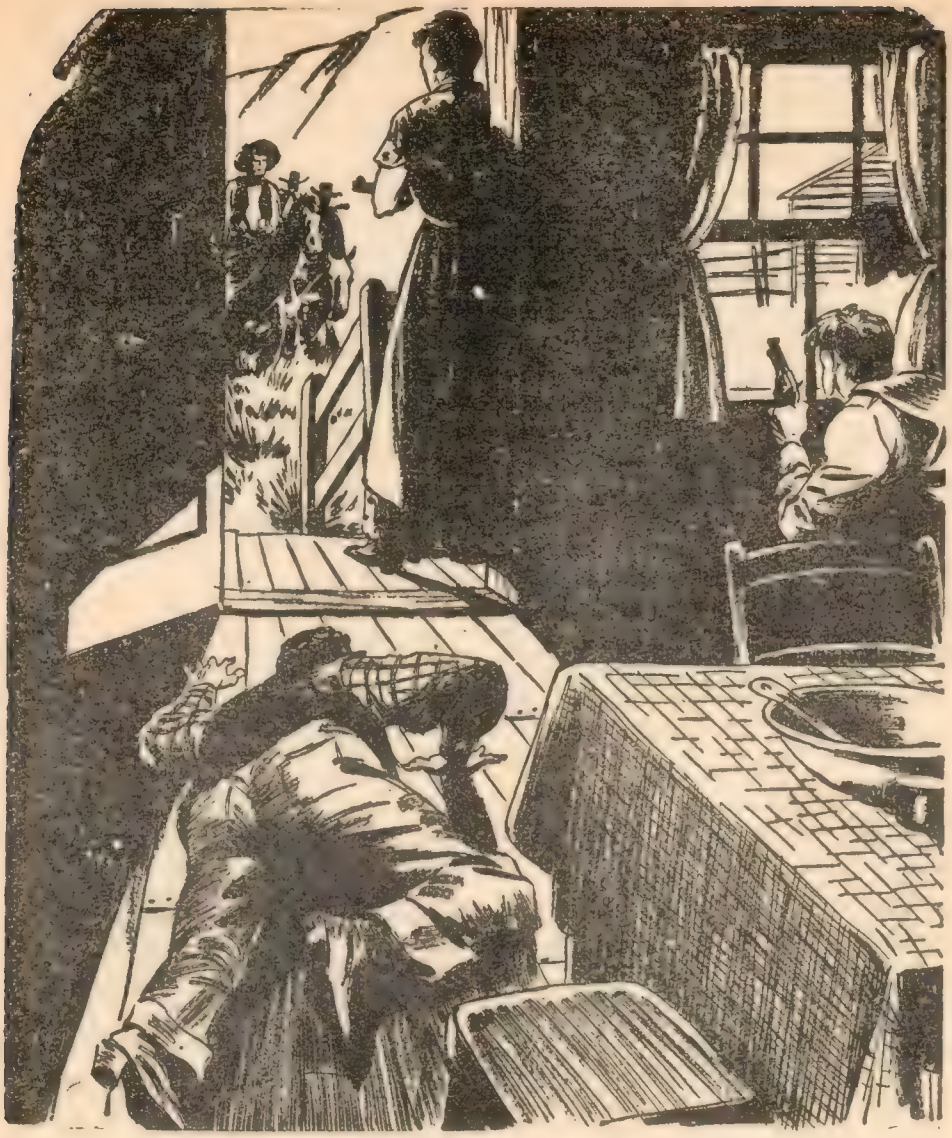
She turned away, crossed the street to the friendly shade of the store. Curious eyes were upon her, but she seemingly failed to see them. Just, his hat in his hand, stood in the middle of the rutted street, watching after her. Then as she vanished into the dimness of the store, he put his hand upon Herbie's head. "Let's go, pardner," he said.

Herbie, his small back arched with anger, walked beside Just. Once, he looked back. Cap and Loosy were as inanimate as wooden Indians, astride their horses.

"I dunno," Cap said slowly. He found his mouth full of tobacco juice. Had to husk two or three times to clear his throat. "We just seen somethin' wrong, Loosy. Don't know what it was, but the play don't shine. Not to me."

●

CAP WAS hunkered alongside the watering-trough, mending a bridle,



"Just wants a woman who has guts, first of all."

when Just Holloway came from the Bar-H ranchhouse, walked toward him. Just's face was serious, worry-wrinkles mixed with the lines of the old pain near his eyes. He was young, too young for the trouble he had had. Now, there was a twelve-year-old boy to think of.

"Am I right, Cap?"

Just perched on the corner of the hand-hewn trough, rolling a cigarette. His question was casual, as though unimportant. Cap wet the end of a bit of waxed thread, squinted as he thrust it through the eye of the awl. " 'Bout, what, Just?"

"Don't fox-trot around about it, Cap. You were in town. You heard me. Was I wrong?"

Cap cleared his throat. Funny. When he thought of Just, or Herbie. Or, even Mary Purdue, his voice got thick and he had to kind of blink his eyes. 'Course, he was older now. And, the sun was bright. His eyes weren't what they used to be time of Matamoras...

"A man's right or wrong, 'cordin' to how he sees it, Just. Ain't for me to say."

Just Holloway was looking across the corral, toward where the stork-legged Loosy was trying to get a rope on a reluctant horse. Man, and animal, went around in determined circles, each seemingly intent on something else. Loosy would throw his loop. Miss. Swear, bitterly. Finally, tangled in his own reata, he got his legs wound under him and went down. Sitting there, seemingly unperturbed, he fished for tobacco in his shirt pocket, casting calm reflections upon the ancestry of the recalcitrant beast.

"I can't take the chance, Cap. Of the same thing happenin' to Herbie. If he grew up and got the same deal I got, I wouldn't blame him for losin' his mind."

Just's voice was still low, but the rotting wood of the watering trough crumpled under the insistent pressure of his lean fingers. He stared at the dark smudge on his fingers.

"There's that show comin'," Cap said slyly. "Herbie needs a pleasure or two."

"M a y b e. But...now...s h e. I can't...I *won't* go."

"I'll take him, Just. Kind of like to see that talkin' typewriter myself."

Determinedly, Cap thrust the awl through a hole in the leather.

"Guess," Just said, "I better go help Loosy. He'll be til' sundown hanging a loop on that horse."

He stood up, straightening his long legs under him, walked toward the corral. Cap was left with a definite sort of hollow victory. Cap was as interested in the talking typewriter of the Professor Xephenon Jones, as he was the next Cuban election. He shrugged. Since Matamoras, the years had made Cap a sort of philosopher.

BUT IT was Herbie who cast the monkey wrench into the machinery of life.

"I don't want to go," he told Cap. His freckled face was flushed with anger. "Pop's wrong about Miss Purdue. Awful wrong. She's good. And, she gave me some candy once. Tells me about her family; her brother who is an actor, or something. She was born on a ranch, too. A big one. And, she could go back, anytime. But, she says she hates it. Anyway, Pop's wrong. I don't care what he says, Miss Purdue'd never hurt anybody. And, I don't have to go if I don't want to."

"No," Cap said, slowly. "You sure don't. Just figured you would. Said it was all right for you to go. That's all."

"Miss Purdue cries, sometimes."

Cap tried to keep pace with Herbie's shifting thought processes. The twelve-year-old mind was too fast for the older man. "When?"

"Oh, Sometimes, Cap. Especially after Pop goes to the schoolboard with something against her. Like the time he raised hell...I mean, *heck*, because he found out that, like she said, her brother was an actor, or something. They asked her was it true and she said yes. I was peekin' through the window watchin'. She was facing them down like...like...well. She said yes he was and what was wrong with that? At least he wasn't going around rustlin' and workin' hair-brands during round-up and things like that. None of them said anymore about it."

Cap grunted. They were sitting on the verandah of the ranchhouse, watching the Texas moon sink into the hills to the north. It was still, a bit cool, and from afar came the quick bark of a coyote. "She said that? About hair-brands?"

"Yeah. I don't know what she meant, but she said it."

Cap grunted again, spat his chew of tobacco into the yard. "It's a rustler's trick, Herbie. During round-up a crooked bunch will help with the brandin'. Only, they'll hold back on the iron, only singe the hair. After the count is tallied, they'll go back. The hair brand'll only last a few days. Then, they can rebrand any way they

want to. If she knows that trick, she was born ranchwise right enough. I was wrong; that's all."

They heard the sound, then. The crisp slither of steel tires against the sand. There was the sodden clop of hooves and a buggy came into the ranch yard. Plain in the moonlight, the driver sat, holding a limber buggy whip in his hand.

"Is this the Bar-H?" he asked. He threw his reins over the whip-socket, climbed awkwardly down the front wheel to the ground. He was a big man, fat. The checks in his suit were plain, as was the thick gold chain and tooth that dangled across his bulging vest.

"I am," he said, "the Professor Xephenon Jones. Hailed by nobility. Acclaimed by the common man in both the United States and the Territories. From the cold waters of the Atlantic Ocean to the sullen West, where the redman roams, my name is known. And, the weird, the uncanny, the almost lifelike intelligence of my talking typewriter."

"Golly," Herbie said. He had his hands thrust deep in his overall pockets, was squirming self-consciously upon the edge of the verandah.

"And, this," the Professor said, "this must be the lad who came to me so well-recommended."

"He didn't come to you," Cap said, gruffly. "You came to him, pilgrim. And, what's the play?"

"Your own school teacher, a Miss Mary Purdue, has told me of this youngster. Now, it happens, that in my occupation, which is in allowing the world to become familiar with my marvelous machine, my living typewriter, I often have need of a helpmate, shall we say?"

"You're sayin' it, pilgrim."

"Yes. Now..."

The Professor came closer, placing his bulk gingerly between Cap and Herbie. The verandah creaked, settled. Satisfied that it would hold his weight, Xephenon Jones continued, "Now, here is what I have in mind..."

●

THERE was a crudely lettered sign by the schoolhouse door: *Leave your hand guns at the door. This is going to be a quiet evening.* It was signed: *Marshal. Hell's Bend.*

Herbie waited while Cap and Loosy shucked their .44's at the door, fighting the butterflies of excitement that seemed to have taken residence in his stomach.

"Pop," he said, tugging at Cap's arm. "Reckon he'll find out?"

"How, button." Cap, as an afterthought, threw his chew out the door. "No gobboons," he exclaimed, in disgust.

"Me and Loosy ain't talkers. Your pop'll never show up here. Not with the schoolma'm showing her pretty face. Naw, it's safe enough..."

Herbie looked toward the front of the schoolhouse to where some of the seats had been moved to make way for a crude stage. Xephenon Jones, resplendent in bulk and checked suit was waiting. Near him, on a box four feet high, by, maybe four square, was the typewriter. It was an ordinary, quite ordinary, typewriter. It waited patiently, metal-work gleaming softly in the wan light of the kerosene lanterns. Quickly, Herbie slipped away from Cap, wormed his way through the jostling crowd. Maybe, even then, the Professor was waiting. For him.

Cap and Loosy, finding people hunched in most of the undersized seats, stood back by the door. "I'd never get in one, anyway," Loosy mourned. "Way I'm built, someone'd have to whittle off four or five feet of me. Reckon I'll just stand and grow taller."

Cap grunted, but said nothing. He was watching the important bulk of the Professor who was lovingly polishing the typewriter with a bit of dirty

rag. One by one, the voices hushed, the slither of booted feet stopped. In the far corner of the building a man sneezed, loudly. Xephenon Jones looked mournfully in that general direction, then faced the gaping crowd.

"My friends," he said, his heavy voice rolling from the roughly-hewn rafters. "You will witness something tonight which is well beyond the common ken. Something that has caused kings to exclaim and queens to swoon."

He paused, impressively.

"You see before you, on this quite ordinary box, the only machine of its kind in the known world; the talking typewriter. One by one, as you ask a question, I will type it on these sheets of paper. Then, without the further touch of human hands, *that question will be answered!*"

Xephenon Jones looked over the crowd. For an instant his eyes touched Cap's, then, he looked away.

I know it, Cap told himself. *Just like I figured the other night. I've seen that customer somewhere, before. Now, where was it?*

THE PROFESSOR droned on. His voice was hypnotically reaching the ears of everyone in the school room, yet he spoke softly. "Now, among these good people present, who will be the first to test the ability of this miraculous machine? Who...will ...be first?"

A lanky cowman, in the first row, raised his hand.

"Your question, sir, and your name?"

"I'm Sim Peters." He looked quickly once around the room, then at the floor. A dull red tide swept up the back of his thin neck. He shuffled his boots awkwardly on the pine floor.

"There's a lady..." Peters stammered, amidst guffaws. "I wonder..."

Xephenon Jones smiled. "I think I know what you mean."

He turned to the typewriter, conscious of the complete hush that held the hall, and pecked with one finger. Then, finished, he stepped back, waited. He was fully eight feet from the box when the machine began tapping. Eagerly, necks were craned, breathing was almost stilled. The typewriter clicked and was silent. The Professor, with a flourish, drew the bit of paper from the platen, waved it in the air.

"Aloud, sir," he asked. "Or, would you prefer a private communication."

"Hell," Sim Peters said, "read it out; don't make no difference."

"As you wish, sir. As you all know," the Professor went on. "The gentleman wished to know the attitude of a certain young lady toward him. The lady, of course, will remain unnamed. I asked the machine this: *What are the feelings of the lady in question toward Sim Peters.*"

There was a silence as thick as Rio mud. "The answer: *'Why don't he shave once in a while?'* "

In the general hubbub, as the paper was being passed around, Loosy said, "Well, I'll be jiggered. I'll be eternally jiggered."

Cap grinned. "I expected you would."

Cap was aware of fingers, tight upon his elbow. Turning, he saw Just Holloway close behind him. Just was still in range garb, still packing his guns. There was the suggestion of a smile on his face...irony lighted his dark eyes.

"Watch for it," he told Cap grimly. "Watch for hell to pop!"

"What's up, boss?"

"This guy's a crook," Just said, quietly. "And, there's something else. This is the end of Hell's Bend's female schoolteacher, too. Wait."

"How come?"

"His name's not Jones," Just whispered quickly, disregarding the curious stares of those close. "It's Purdue. He's Mary Purdue's brother. A fool would know that. Look at him. Knock

off about a hundred-fifty pounds and they're spit images."

"Yeah," Cap agreed. "That's been botherin' me. I was wonderin' where I seen him before... It's account he looks like her. That's what had me looped."

JUST WASN'T listening. His eyes were intent, full of fury, as he watched 'Xephenon Jones' take questions from the suddenly gullible people of Hell's Bend. Suddenly, Cap felt the brush of a body against his. Just was gone, threading his way through the crowd toward the stage. Another question had been asked and the answer given.

"Wait a minute!" Just Holloway had worked his way close to the stage, was holding up his hand. Everyone present knew him, respected him. They fell silent.

"This thing's a fake," Just said, bitterly. "Let me tell you. The Professor here...would you like to know his real name? It's Purdue. Ask your new schoolteacher what that means. Ask her, if you can find her, what's going on. After awhile, there'll be someone stupid enough to want to buy that typewriter. Sure. It would be worth millions. If it could answer questions."

Sim Peters, who had been standing nearby, his mouth open to object, turned and melted into the crowd.

"In fact," Just grinned, thinly. "I think someone was about to try to buy it, then..."

Sim hastened his stride, slid out the door and into the night. There was laughter following him.

"I said," Just repeated. "*If* it could answer questions. You've wondered, by now, where Mary Purdue is. I'll tell you."

He stopped, swallowed. "She's in that box. Under the machine. *She* works it somehow. *She* answers the questions."

Professor Xephenon Jones was standing quite still, looking quizzically

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at Just Holloway. His eyes were calm, there was laughter tugging at the corners of his fat mouth. "Would the gentleman like to bet?" he asked.

Cap had worked his way close to Just. "That's enough, boss." He said, chewing the ragged ends of his moustache. "They'll git. Let's go home."

Just was still angry. He shook away from Cap, went a step nearer the stage. "Yeah," he said, "I'll bet fifty bucks she's in that box."

"It's taken."

THE PROFESSOR had a wallet in his thick hands, was riffling through a wad of bills. Cap, suddenly, found himself holding the stakes.

Just was on the stage, his .44 in his hand. "We'll see," he said, grimly. "The Professor tells us there's no one in there. We'll find out. *I'll just shoot the box full of holes!*"

"Gawddlemighty, No! Just. *NO!*"

It was Cap, thundering, fighting the press of humanity that held him away from the stage. "No, Just!"

Smiling a little, Just leveled his hand gun at the box, waited. There was no sound. Xephenon Jones stood quietly, soberly. There was a thin rime of perspiration across his forehead. Impatiently, he wiped it away.

"I don't know," he said, "whether you're drunk, or crazy; maybe you've allowed the hatred of a woman to warp your mind. Shoot at the box, if you want to. Either way, *you lose.*"

Slowly, carefully, Just threw a thumb over the knurled hammer of his gun, drew it back. Then, quite suddenly, the Furies fell...

From the improvised wings at the edge of the stage, Mary Purdue, her hair in disarray, her eyes wide with anger, flew toward him, began pummeling him with her small fists. "You fiend," she said. "You...oh...you... man!"

Just, trying to defend himself, dropped his gun to the stage, but managed poorly. Feminine sinews, when toughened by early years on the range, are almost as formidable as man's. Cap, seeing his chance, worked close, picked up the fallen gun.

Just, trying to get under Mary's angry blows, squatted on the stage, thrusting outward with one booted foot. Before she saw the trap, Mary Purdue fell into it. Gasping, still beating at him, she fell into his lap. Her hip struck the box, sent the typewriter flying into a pile of wreckage. In the midst of it, blinking in the sudden light, was Herbie.

"Hi, son." Just said, holding an armful of now-quiet feminity. "Ready to go home?"

"Yeah, pop." Herbie was grinning broadly. "You bet."

In the stillness, Cap's voice was loud. "I'll be durned," he said. "I'll be cow-kicked; they's blanks in this gun. Blanks!"

IN THE early morning, the Bar-H was a pleasant place. The day had not, as yet, begun to be hot, and long fingers of shade touched the corral. Nearby, holding a box full of sand, Loosy was waiting...

The creak of the buggy was loud in the quiet.

Xephenon Jones, holding the reins waited while Just Holloway came from the house. Mary Purdue, in the buggy beside her brother, said nothing. But there was a tight line of white near her nose and the freckles were flying.

"You're very smart, Mister Holloway," she said, grimly. "Very. Too smart for a common schoolteacher. How you found my brother, I don't know. But, you did. Oh, he's told me the whole story. *You* sent for him. Tried to run a whizzer on me."

Unconsciously, in her anger, she had lapsed into ranch talk.

"But you got caught in your own loop. You were trying, in any way you could, to get me fired. You didn't want a woman schoolteacher at Hell's Bend. Well..."

She stopped talking, looked across

the flats to where the mountains were purple in the sunlight. "You succeeded, Mister Holloway. I'm going home." She began crying. Not loudly, but openly. She made no move to dab at her eyes with the tiny handkerchief she carried.

"That's where I belong...home. Not trying to cram sense into the heads of brats. Goodby, Mister Holloway."

Just was grinning. Xephenon Jones had a wide smile on his fat face. Even Loosy, who was stooping behind the buggy, winked. Cap, coming onto the scene, stood perplexed.

Xephenon Jones tapped the team with his buggy-whip, the wheels crunched in the sand and went through the open gate.

Cap spat. "Fine bunch of bones," he said. There was open animosity as he watched Just. "Getting her fired from her job. Threatenin' to kill your own son. Oh, I know. They was only blanks in the gun. And, *you* didn't know he was in that box."

He walked toward the corral. "I think," he said, grimly, "I'll go find me another job, some kind. This'n don't suit me, seems like."

He felt Just's fingers on his arm, heard the words, but they made no sense. "Have to know a lot about a woman before you talk about marryin' her," Just said. "Listen, and you'll learn, you old moss-back. First, I had to find out if she had guts. Last one didn't." For an instant there was pain again in Just's eyes. Then it was gone. Cap didn't have to be told that it was gone for good.

"Then, in case there's a young'un in the family, you have to know if *she* loves *him*. Understand? She proved it last night. She would have fought the demons of hell last night for Herbie."

Just chuckled. Cap liked the sound.

Then, he went on. "She wasn't cryin' for anger, while ago. If she was mad at me, she knows I could make that up to her. She was cryin' because she loves it here. Loves Herbie. Didn't want to leave. Simple, ain't it?"

"Yeah," Cap agreed, morosely. "Seems like you traded one horn for t'other, though. She's gone."

Just Holloway's laughter rang out. Yes, early, like this, the Bar-H was a pleasant place. Just the place for a girl like Mary Purdue.

"You better get off down the road," Just told Cap. "If Loosy got enough sand in that back axle, I reckon you'll find the buggy about a half-mile away with a locked wheel. Better take Herbie, too. He'll be wonderin' what's happened to his new mom."

Cap spat at a lizard. Missed.

"I'll be cow-kicked," he said. What else was there to say?

★

A mail-order detective wouldn't have pulled a boner like this, Guthrie Lamb moaned! Arthur Conning had given him seven C-notes to keep an eye on Conning's blonde daughter, to see that she kept out of trouble. And he'd let Deborah give him the slip, then turn up missing as the key witness to murder!

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It leads off the May issue of

FAMOUS DETECTIVE STORIES

ABLE CAIN'S GOLD-BEARING GOPHER

by A. A. Baker

Pike Peel couldn't figure why Judge Able Cain was suddenly going gopher-hunting, or why he wanted one of the critters stuffed. But when that gopher turned out to have had gold-plated teeth...

THE DAY was murky. Half-light shone through the thin, hazy sky. As the sun needled its way through, Able Cain squirmed his fat body in appreciation. His blue cast-off army pants were hiked up above his boot-tops in direct contrast with his exposed red undershirt. The green Sierras poked pine and oak-studded peaks into the muddy sky and dwarfed the red clap-boarded buildings of Apex. Apex didn't mind; it let its lean, steep streets run smoothly into the brush. The townsfolk didn't see the mountains; they scampered in and out and buzzed their bee-hive way without thought of the sun, sky, or mountains.

Jab Logan was big and ugly and bloody. His crusted boots splashed through much of the slaughterhouse yard and he stalked his way through the gate and down the dusty Apex mainstreet to O'Connell's bar. Ragged miners hushed their talk; women crossed the street, holding their dragging skirts protectively close. Many turned to watch his progress, as they'd turn to stare at a rabid dog, staggering off to die.

Able Cain, from his leaning barrel-chair on the hotel porch, watched Logan through reflective eyes. The judge reached out a long arm to shake his sleeping partner awake. "Pike...I say, Pike!" The sleeping man grunted with each poke before he finally, regretfully, gave up and answered. "Nuh?"

"I feel like talking, Pike; it's running out my ears. Everytime I see that critter..."

"An' every time I get to snoozin'..." grunted Pike Peel, the words coming bitterly from his thin, warped face... "yew feel like talkin'. Well, go right ahead; thet's why they elected yew judge. Talkin'est fella always gets to be judge of these gold-minin' towns. Close-mouthed fellas get rich minin'."

"Don't see gold-dust running out'a your pockets, Pike." The judge smiled. "Howsomever, let me finish. Every time I see that Logan critter, he's got butcherhouse-blood all over himself. Don't never seem to wash it off. Must like..."

"Shucks, Judge..." the spiderlike partner tried to cut off the flow of speech... "somebody's gotta butcher, an' when yew butcher, yew gotta get some muck on yoreself. Let it lay... let it lay..." He tipped his hat over his eyes and relaxed in the warm Sierra sunshine.

"You know how men come and go, Pike. The rush to California brought the good and the bad. First, they was all honest; you could leave your pack on the trail and weeks later it'd still

The cat tossed up a gopher.

be there, without a single buckle undid. Man get sick, someone'd stay with him 'til he died, or got well and was able to travel. Man'd be hungry...somebody'd share with him."

The judge paused, then continued sorrowfully, "But everything changed. No law, and the bad ones caught wise. They'd steal the pallet whilst you was sleeping on it. If a miner got forty rod off the trail he'd likely die at the hands of a scoundrel. Could scream for help, and others would be afraid to go to his aid. Then, when it got too bad, come the Miner's Courts. They was able to control the killing and stealing, and for a while things was reasonable safe. But then..." Pike snored and the judge reached out a pudgy leg and tripped the barrel chair. Pike grasped frantically for the porch rail; he missed, and flopped into the street. Forlornly, he looked up as the chair rolled away.

"But then..." the judge continued evenly... "the Miner's Courts went sour. They became a power into themselves, some still good; others as evil as the men controlled. The big rush passed. Everything kind'a fit a pattern. Big mines, controlled by Eastern stock companies. Now you have to use subterfuge to break the law and..."

"*What in thunderation...*" demanded the furious Pike... "has thet all got to do with Jab Logan, the slaughterhouse man?"

"I was getting to that," the judge said mildly. He rose and pushed his white hat back on his bushy head,

squinted a curious eye toward O'Connell's Bar. Dimly, he could see a ruckus of flailing bodies, and hear the tramp of fighting feet. He watched the languid townsfolk come awake and start gathering in front of O'Connell's like a flock of chickens.

"It'll wait, Pike. Let's see what's the ruckus in O'Connell's."

THE TWO men crossed the gravel street and pushed their way into the bar. It was a fight with a deadly undertone. Logan had a meat-hook in a bloody hand that extended from a heavy, leather butcher's cuff. The shaft of the hook circled around and behind his victim's neck, the pin pointed edge was buried half an inch, close to the large vein. The drops of blood that ran down from the point were a rich red; the eyes staring out from the victim's white face were calm and steady.

"Take yore knife away, Samuels, or I'm gonna tear yore juglar out..." Logan's voice carried a strain of ill-concealed fear.

"Tear away, Logan..." Samuel's voice was calm... "jest remember, I got an inch of bowie next yore guts, an' 'fore I die, yew'll feel thet bowie against yore spine an' I'll be twistin' whilst I'm dyin'. Yew ought'a know; yew're a butcherin' man. This knife's gonna jerk if'n yew don't leave loose with thet meat-hook."

Judge Able Cain reached over behind the bar, retrieved the bung-starter and pounded three heavy raps; bottles jumped at his shout. "Court's in session! Let the combatants step one pace backward." He unloosed his navy colt and the cock of the hammer sounded like the pop of a firecracker in the tense room.

"Looks like a Mexican stand-off anyways," he said. "Now step back, or I'll plug the two of you."

Samuels dropped his arms, and the bowie clattered onto the board floor. His eyes stared steadily into Logan's

His Honor, Judge Able Cain

as the butcher withdrew the hook. Everyone breathed explosively and the judge continued. "You're both fined a drink for the house." He banged the starter and reached for a bottle; red liquid gurgled and the spectators hurried to the bar.

"*Jest* a minute..." Logan's voice coughed out like a cougar before it leaps... "this man Samuels is gonna balance up. They's four thousand dollars due on the money I loaned; he come in with big plans for raisin' sheep, borrowin' money..."

"I'm a mite behind," answered Samuels. "But raisin' sheep is a little different from gold-minin'. Takes time to get goin'. I'll pay off when..."

"Don't give a good gol-dang about excuses." Logan's voice was filled with hatred. "Yew promised me yew'd have some meat for me to butcher; thet's why I lent the money. Can't butcher on promises. Gotta go all the way to Colfax for meat animals. Yew..."

"Yew can have the whole shebang!" Samuels' angry voice shook. "Take the spread; take the animals."

"I don't want the spread. I want some meat animals, or I want my money back. They's four thousand dollars due."

JUDGE CAIN leaned calmly back against the bar and grunted. "First

"The first gold-hunters only had to fear natural dangers."

principle of law maintains that the money-lender shall have collateral to seize if the borrower can't pay. Samuels, here, says take the spread. Seems to me, Logan, that's fair; it's certainly legal."

"Don't *want* the land." Logan stamped to the door and turned angrily. "I told yew thet. If they ain't any meat animals delivered within a week, I'll take it off Samuels' hide. Yew kin bang on the bar all you want; I'll be carryin' a gun myself. Thet's fair warnin'." The butcher hit the swing-door with his beefy hand until it banged like the rocks falling on a coffin, and stamped down the boardwalk.

Ben Samuels gulped his drink, then stared helplessly at the judge. "How'd a man ever get in such a fix?" Ben spoke slowly, marshalling his thoughts, as though speaking them aloud might ease his mind. "I come into this country...right off the Tuolomme River. Got enough dust to bring in some goats an' a few sheep. Was startin' slow...figured it'd take some time... then this Logan, he steps in an' 'fore I know it, I'm in debt four thousand dollars an' a promise to deliver maybe ten sheep a week. Can't give him my starters..."

"Can't even give him the whole spread." Able Cain muttered thoughtfully. "Say, Ben! Got any gophers on that land?" Able grinned at the puzzled look on the herder's face, then elaborated. "You know—them little animals that chew their way through the ground?"

"Sure, got lots of gophers—big gophers—but they's danged hard to catch," muttered Samuels. "Want to try gopher-huntin'?"

"Yep, sure do, Ben." Pike Peel gazed in astonishment at his partner. "Be out tomorrow; I'll round up my hunting animals and be there by daylight." The judge left the bar and Peel danced out behind him on his spidery legs.

When they got outside, Pike asked. "What's this foolishness about gophers? How's that goin' to help out Ben Samuels?"

"Better get some sleep; we'll be up half the night," grunted the judge. "Gotta catch the six biggest cats in

town. Best time to catch cats is after midnight. Hear 'em howling..."

"Cats! Gophers an' now cats." The little man's voice carried enough disgust to quell a skunk-fight. "I'm going to bed even if'n it is only noon. This has been the dangdest day."

●

Pike and the judge rode slowly down the dawn light trail. Each carried, at arm's length, a spitting, snarling, sack-full of cats. The horses toe-danced along the rim of the rocky road and bent in the middle to get away from the claw-stickered sacks.

They reached the level land where Ben Samuels had his cabin. A stand of corn leaped out in straight rows from the house. He had some vegetables planted in nice clean rows. The water trickled from a lava formation behind the house and flowed gently through the red soil of the garden.

Ben was up. He scooted around the house in pursuit of a goat. "Get back into them rocks; thet garden truck is too good for you." The goat balanced on a rock, then with a flirt of its tail, disappeared into the manzanita.

Tucking his shirt into his pants and snapping his suspenders, Samuels advanced to meet his visitors. "See you really meant it. About them gophers, I mean." He spread a lean hand around the garden. "Jest choose yore stand but don't shoot up the corn; gonna make thet into some fine drinkin'-liquor one of these days."

The visitors swung down from the skittish horses and advanced with the spitting sack held at arm's length. "Don't intend to use any guns," Able said. "Brought the best gopher-hunters in the world, right in these sacks."

THE JUDGE donned a thick leather glove, rolled his sleeve down to the wrist and gingerly reached into the sack. He came out with a fighting cat the size of a dog. "Call them Civit cats. Run wild now'days. Brought out by the miners but got left and don't seem to be any tabby left in 'em. Jest plain cat."

He hooked a collar and a length of trapper's chain onto a yellow animal. Then he staked the cat out next to a gopher hole and moved around the yard. Soon there were six tail-swishing devils staring with yellow eyes at open gopher holes.

The men settled down on their heels against the log house and watched the cats work. The judge kept up a running account of their actions.

"Watch that striped one. See how he crouches behind the hole? Only thing moving is his tail, but he knows they's a gopher ready to come out... watch there! He's got his paw way down in the hole. Watch now...see? The gopher is snatched out and there he goes up in the air 'fore he can find that hole again the cats got him!

"Now...that other one, over there by the tomatoes. He's going right into the hole. There! He's got one. Never seen cats hunt gophers before, huh? Don't go feeling sorry for them gophers; they's plague carriers. Worse'n coyotes; maybe worse than big dock rats. Tear up yore garden besides maybe making you sick."

The morning wore on and the gopher-hunting cats were stuffed back into the sacks. "Taking these babies back to town with us. I'll get 'em some liver from old butcher Logan; they sure earned it. Maybe I better take that big gopher along," the judge mused. "Think I'll get him stuffed. Logan is a regular taxidermist. Did a fine job on a grizzly that Oathes brung in."

●

An hour later, the judge and Pike reined up in front of the slaughter-house. Logan stamped through the muck and the judge reached out a fat gopher. "Can you stuff this fella?

Kind'a like to have him for an ornament. Pay you right." The judge's voice was pacifying. "Seen the job you done on Oathes grizzly. When you was through, that bear was the best looking of the two. Me and Pike," he added carefully..."been killing gophers down on Bear River Flat; never seen so many in one place."

Logan smiled until his yellowed teeth and brown gums were exposed. "I'll fix the little critter for yew, Judge." He frowned petulantly. "Thet's 'cause I got plenty of time on my hands. Thet Samuels ain't brung me any butcherin' animals yet." He hefted the gopher. "Take me 'bout two, three, days to do a good job." The judge nodded and left.

BARELY an hour had passed before a nervously-nonchalant Logan hurried down the street and climbed the three steps that led to the hotel porch. Able Cain was seated in his barrel chair alongside a snoring Pike Peel.

Logan spat into the dust, then bluntly came to the point. "Been thinkin' Judge, after the ruckus in the saloon yesterday. About takin' over raisin' them meat animals of Samuel's myself. Know he's mighty mad...so figgered yew'd maybe settle the deal with him. Let him know I changed my mind. Might be easier'n if I tried it, huh?"

"Samuels is moving his sheep." The judge stared thoughtfully at the slaughterhouse man. "He's moving over to the other side of Blue Canyon. I got maybe five hundred acres over there—good grass—and he can run them all over that mountain. Ain't another living soul in that country. He gave me his note for half interest. That makes me a partner, so I figured I'd borrow the money from the Smithy and pay you off. Four thousand Samuels owes, ain't it?"

Logan's face flushed and his voice slid to a shout. "I told him, an' now I'm tellin' yew. I don't want the mon-

They were the Lords from the Sky, genuinely benevolent, but they over-looked an important fact about Mankind. And a minor ruler pointed his finger, and intoned

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•

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ey; jest want some slaughterin' animals. Even if'n I gotta raise 'em myself." A crafty look crossed his red face. "I'm takin' over his land down on the Bear River. Gonna bring in some animals of my own. Yew're his partner...here..." He reached into a greasy pouch and extracted a legal-looking paper.

"I'll write off his note for the four thousand if'n yew'll give me a deed to thet Bear River Flat. Best land in these parts for raisin' sheep an' goats." Logan's hands were trembling.

The judge scratched a few lines on a piece of note paper. "Guess it's a good bargain." He signed his name with a flourish. "Says on this paper, for the consideration of four thousand dollars that Ben Samuels owes Jab Logan, Able Cain and Ben Samuels passes on the title of the land jointly owned by each, known as the Bear River Flat. Now, Jab, this transaction clears Ben Samuels of all obligation that said Jab Logan may hold against the aforementioned Ben Samuels."

Logan was fairly dancing in his tracks as he waved the deed over his head and shouted. "Thet's gonna be worth plenty. Ha! There's *gold* on thet flat!"

The judge grinned and Pike sank slowly back into his seat. He waited with pleased anticipation for the big slaughterhouse man to get the shock of his life.

"There's gold everywhere." The judge was winding up for one of his sermonizing tirades, savoring each word as it passed his lips. "There's gold in the hearts of the men that settled the mighty state of California. There's gold in the rivers that will someday float the mighty fleets of nations and carry the rich produce back to a hungry world. There's gold in the flocks and pasture lands, and in the forests of these mighty mountains. There's raw gold deep in the earth that miners will bring to the surface for the benefit of mankind but..." his eyes narrowed, his voice slowed, as his eyes flicked out over the people who had gathered to listen... "let your greedy ears drink this in, my slaughterhouse friend. *There's no gold under the ground on Bear River Flat!*"

Logan's laughter shrilled hysterically and people drew back in amazement. He controlled himself and yelled. "There's gold at the grass roots. Thet gopher yew brung in..." the next words were a ringing shout... "it's got gold teeth! It's been diggin' through an alluvial deposit thet's rotten with surface gold. I've seen it in sheep, once, down by Hangtown. Fella traced the sheep back to it's grazin' ground an' struck it rich; thet sheep was croppin' the grass close an' gettin' gold fillin's." The crowd muttered agreement; they'd all heard the story and figured it was a mighty dirty trick for Logan practically to steal the Bear River Flat.

The butcher wasn't through gloating. "Thet little gopher can't have got it nowheres else; they don't move 'round much. Jest gold plated his teeth in the gravel of thet flat. Sure outsmarted thet Ben Samuels an' yew..."

Pike Peel couldn't hold back any longer. "Thet gopher had gold teeth all right but...yew connivin' idjit... we *plated* his teeth! The judge an' me melted down four dollars worth of dust an' plated his teeth. Then, we brung the animal to yew, knowin' yew would find it an' come runnin' to steal thet land."

The crowd gazed in pleased relief toward the judge for confirmation. They roared with laughter as he winked solemnly then spoke. "There's gold in the hearts of the men in this great state, but they's no gold in Bear River Flat!"

★

WILD KING'S CORONATION

The story of Tal, flame-colt of the wild band, and the men who wanted him . . .

By Harold F. Cruickshank

THE PLUM-COLORED tint of sunset's afterglow lingered in all its glory over the rugged slopes of the Bitter Roots, drenching the gulleys and gorges and tipping the promontories with a final touch of beauty before dusk began to sift its grayed ashes down on the mountain wilderness.

Tal, the young flame colt of the

wild band, groaned as he struggled to his feet in a patch of dogwood scrub. He had taken a severe battering from the mighty hoofs of Manya, the chieftain stallion. Tal was young, only just having touched his second year of wild life. Hot blood had surged through his system, dispossessing him of better judgment.

Now Manya, the stalwart chieftain, reared, screaming. His powerful forehoofs had started lashing downward when suddenly a shifting wind brought to his fluted nostrils the dread tang scent of man... The big stallion whirled on his hind hoofs and went plunging into the scrub-brush thicket which flanked the rim of the plateau...

In the seclusion of his hideout, under a group of stunted pinons, across a narrow canyon, Lan Davey swore softly. From his point of vantage, he had watched the wild battle, wincing at every battering barrage of rear hoofs as both chieftain stallion and colt went into action. More than once, Davey had raised his carbine, determined to save the flame colt, even if it meant wounding old Manya.

For days, Lan had packed in along the tortuous old elk trails, following Manya and his band. He had watched Tal, the flame colt, since the youngling suddenly appeared with the band as a gangly-legged yearling.

Lan recognized strong blood-lines in the colt's conformation; saw in Tal a potential stud for his horse-band nucleus, back at the small ranch his father had left him in the undulating valley below.

Manya himself was no ordinary mustang stallion, but a creature of finely arched neck, suggesting the blood line of Percheron stock not far back along the line... Davey argued with himself that Tal, the youngling colt, though possibly he could have been the progeny of Manya, was the son of a blooded Morgan dam, an escapee from some distant outfit beyond the valley.

Now, huskily, there came the cry of a mare, and the jaded colt flung up his head, snorting blood from his nostrils, and Lan Davey's eyes half closed as Tal minced out to the clearing, to stand head-high, posed as if sculptured from the reddish-tinted rock wall beyond.

Not in all his experience in the wilds had Davey ever seen a better horse-creature, nor had he ever coveted a horse so much. Back at his home corral, under the care of his lone helper and friend, Dan Bryson, was a palomino filly...

Tal and the Princess... A natural couple!

Lan's hopes for their get were not extravagant dreams—chestnut colts and fillies which would be the envy of all lovers of good stock!

Now, again, the old mare cried, and the loud penetrating bugle of old Manya sounded. The old lead mare had sounded a warning; it brought the jaded colt Tal back to the full consciousness of emergency.

"Lion, mebbe!" Davey said softly. "Better get the wind and mosey on down...

LION IT was, or rather—lioness. Acheeta, queen cougar of this sector of the Bitter Roots, came weaving on down her fayorite trail with a grace and silence no other creature could emulate.

Nor could any other wildling predator claim her lust for killing. She had a litter of seven half-grown younglings, scarcefully weaned. Thus her responsibilities were heavy...and of all sources of food there was none that appealed more strongly than horse—especially the youngling colts and fillies of Manya's wild band.

A part-moon was already shafting its creamy light down on the wilds as Davey crept silently along the canyon rim. Now he dipped down, hesitated to listen for the drum of hoofs, then moved on, to make his climb.

Now he crouched low at the sudden pound of hoofs, and from his hideout,

he watched the handsome form of young Tal pound by.

Wild cries now pierced the closing nightfall... The cries of frightened young horse stock, and the man shuddered with pity for them... But when, suddenly, the strident cry of old Manya sounded and was flung back from the mountain sides in wild echoes, Davey felt better.

Tal sounded, and there was no battle challenge in his calls; he was going into action and shortly, Davey glimpsed him trotting magnificently around a huddled group of young stock, in a small boxed meadow below...

He snuffled the dread tang of the big cat from his nostrils. Suddenly he had lost all his bombastic swagger which had attended his earlier challenge of Manya. Fear-sweat sopped his coat like soapy lather. Instinctively he became charged with a responsibility—a responsibility to the primary fundamental of preservation of his life, and the preservation of the lives of his band members.

At his back, old Manya roared as he threshed into a low wolf willow thicket finging the meadow... Then, suddenly, Tal froze at the wild scream of a young filly. It was then he sensed that more than one enemy had come down from the hills.

Acheeta, the big lioness, was accompanied by a big male and Tal whirled at a crash nearby.

The little filly was down, threshing in tall grass and there was a sharp tang of blood-scent on the air.

Here was the young flame colt's greatest challenge. He saw the glowing eyes of old Mog, the shaggy little chief consort lead mare; then as he tossed his head, another pair of eyes glowed, from low down in the grass. They were the eyes of the evil one—the big young lion, whose jaws drooled dully-stained saliva.

THEY LUNGED together, Tal and the lead mare, but the lion was alert, and his long sleek form whisked to one side, out of range of striking hoofs. Suddenly, he catapulted forward and a set of foretalons raked upward. The little mare screamed as she went down on her knees and face; in that split second, the lion could have delivered a second coup de gras, but Tal's fighting blood was now hot, his adolescent headstrongness gone from him. He wheeled, swapping ends with the speed of chain lightning, and instantly threw a terrific rear-hoofed barrage.

One hoof connected, catching the lion going away, but rocking him smashing against a clump of willows.

Tal spun...and up at his vantage point, his rifle at the ready, the man watched wide eyed as the colt reared and started his powerful forehoofs down.

Out of the nearby brush, though, another set of eyes gleamed like revolving green-red lumps.

Acheeta had swung back, and her long body rose superbly....

Only his well-tuned sense of alertness saved Tal. He half-reared and spun, as those talons struck; he was rocked back, down almost wholly on his rump. Acheeta's talons had struck, but had only raked a superficial tear in his off side flank; now brush screened him from the watching man...

Then came the terrible bugle of old Manya and the stomp of his great hoofs. Davey watched the oldster charge, rear, strike... There was a high-pitched cat-scream, but Davey could not see the result...

Shortly, at the drum of hoofs, he knew that Manya was giving chase. The wild battle was done...then, out of the brush came Tal. He minced toward the old lead mare, muzzled her a moment or two, then flinging high his head he gave out a long, piercing cry which echoed in grandiose tones along the rugged gorges.

With that cry Tal gave expression to his attainment of maturity. Out of the battle had come the passing of his greatest test...and up on the plateau-

shelf above, the man licked his dried lips as a smile tucked up his mouth corners.

The wild band began to stir. The soft whinnies of young stock came and the snuffles of reassurance from the mares... Then again the pound of heavy hoofs as Manya returned...

Young Tal gave out no challenge; he stood, though, without a quiver of a muscle as the big old stallion approached. Their glowing eyes flashed fire, but Manya suddenly shook out his head, snuffled softly; instantly, old Mog, the lead mare, started the herd off to westward, trotting forward to take the lead. Tal swung into step, into the trail of the moving band while Manya stood long moments, a rearguard sentinel...

Topside, Lan Davey slung his carbine over a shoulder and shrugged. He wondered just how long, now, before old Manya would again be challenged and forced again to give battle —battle to the death, or to abdication...

As he moved away, down to make camp by his tethered ponies, Lan was stirred by what he had witnessed ...More than ever, he felt the pulsating urge, the desire for the capture of the handsome Tal; but he also sensed that the task would become more and more difficult. He had seen for himself the passing of the young flame colt Tal, and the birth of Tal, the stallion...

●

LAN DAVEY was forced back, at last, to help his oldster friend Bryson with the haying, while high in the foothills plateaus, the wild horse band, though ever alert, moved from one sweetgrass range to another...

Today, young Tal played with a pair of pretty long yearling fillies, rearing with them in mock battle, as the sun slanted down through tall cottonwoods to fleck the small meadow and touch flame to his glistening coat.

The main band were on a higher level, with old Manya stretched out in the open sunlight, while Mog, her lower lip drooping heavily, stood guard on a rimrock shelf.

It was today that Davey had come up to scout and now, his heart thumping wildly, he watched the youngsters, pretty little yearlings, bare their teeth and converge as if by pre-planned tactics on the handsome two-year old colt.

They rose together, and Tal's beautiful mane and tail pennanted in the soft breeze. This was the finest sight Davey had ever caught of the horse he coveted so strongly.

Then suddenly Tal wheeled at his full height and the watching man turned... Standing head high, at the easterly brush-fringed edge of the meadow, was a handsome little mare whose soft snuffles had brought an end to Tal's play.

Lan quivered as he watched the flame colt's mounting agitation. Tal flung up his head, curled his top lip and bared his teeth as he throated soft sounds.

Instantly the watching man's mind alerted. There, in the little mare, whose seductive voice sounds were already bringing glistening white lather to Tal's flanks, stood opportunity— Davey's greatest opportunity for the capture of Tal.

The man tested wind and was satisfied. He backed his favorite cutting-horse a pace or two deeper into the brush, swung in the saddle as Tal started toward the neck of the meadow, snuffling in feverish excitement...

But the little chestnut, her eyes aglow with newborn fear, whipped about and trotted away.

Lan chuckled softly at this display of wild coyness, but he licked his dry lips and set them firmly now. The chestnut was playing right into his hands... She was leading Tal away

from the guardianship of the very alert old mare Mog...

Tal increased his pace to long bounds, but the mare sprang forward to pound over a hogback ridge, and Davey neck-reined his bronc off at right angles. His sure-footed mount gingerly started down a stiff decline into a gorge, and Lan kneed him sharply left at the bottom. He pulled up to a halt, cocked his head; then came the familiar sounds, though muffled, and Davey's smile returned.

MOVING slowly on, he sighted the chestnut, at last; she had fetched up at the cul de sac of a small boxed meadow which was the actual end, or mouth, of the gorge...

"Lucky, me!" Davey said softly, stroking his gelding's neck. He toyed with his catch rope. This was it! If only he played his rope, his timing, well, he couldn't miss, for there was only one swift way out of the boxed meadow... That was past the man and his horse...

Davey shook out his rope, built his loop and snaked it a time or two to make sure there were no kinks. He started when he heard the drum of hoofs, but was satisfied they were Tal's hoofs.

Then he glimpsed the flame colt poised on the high rim above the meadow. The colt lowered and bobbed his head as he hesitated to start the descent. Davey could wait no longer. He touched his horse's flank with a heel, then picked him into a lope.

For a moment or so the little mare was wholly unconscious of her danger, then suddenly she reared, screaming, and above, Tal rocked back almost on his rump.

Davey swore softly. He had almost made his cast when the little chestnut whirled and almost escaped, but Lan's horse had cut in expertly to head her off; now, frantically, she tried to hurl herself up the high bank of an old beaver dam.

Lan felt a surge of pity for her as she dropped heavily and rolled. He had no desire to see her hurt at all. He wore no spurs; he never set out to "bust" a bronc, but gentled them easily, as for months he had planned to start gentling Tal.

Now all his senses were alert. He must not miss; his first cast must be the one, and he shook out his loop as he called softly to his mount.

The little mare stood facing him, head down and shaking savagely as she gave out husky screams, then suddenly she reared, and lunged. Lan's horse spun automatically, almost without a touch of knee or rein. The mare was in full flight, a flash of chestnut, almost a blur, when Lan spun his rope, and let it go...

The little mare coughed sharply as that snake-like thing jerked tight around her throat.

SHE LUNGED, half-rearing, coughing in her attempts at screams, but Lan's horse settled back, holding perfectly, as its rider dismounted, and untied a second rope.

As he crawled his tight catch-rope, Lan cast a swift glance topside, but Tal had vanished, and for a brief moment or so the man felt a surge of shame. These were the wildling creatures of the hinterland, and he had gravely interrupted their first realization of the definite attainment of their maturity...

Now as Lan closed in, the little mare's fear changed swiftly to a combination of both fear and savage anger. She whirled and lunged in on the rope. But the man was alert, and whipped to one side, shaking out his second loop.

Snorting, as the foam flecked from her jaws and flanks, the chestnut reared and lunged in an attempt to strike, but the catch rope jerked her down and like a flash the man's second rope expertly front-footed her, bringing her down on her off side.

There was a terrific, lashing struggle, during which Lan winced with pain in his right thigh as a hoof

caught him a glancing blow. But he made his flight and won and now stepped back, breathing hard as his eyes roved over the beautiful conformation of the prone and defeated chestnut.

"That's as near trouble, hurt, as you'll get, baby," he called softly. "I wouldn't hurt you if I *never* got Tal. Just hang an' rattle a spell, and all will be okay for you..."

He called up his horse and before another hour had gone, he had his captive securely snubbed down to a standing cottonwood.

He had a swift ride back to his ranch, for equipment with which to design a pole trap corral.

Satisfied the captive mare was well secured, he mounted and headed for home, and with each step his gelding took, Lan's heart picked up sharper beat. He wondered what old Dan Bryson would think of his plan...

●

Dan Bryson was pleased. The old wrangler, who had been with the little Davey spread since not long after Lan's father had homesteaded it, nodded his head with approval, as he grinned.

"Better'n if'n you'd gone all out after the young stud, Lan," he said huskily. "You were using your baid, boy..." He clapped Lan's near shoulder, but suddenly a coarse throat-sound escaped him and his whiskered jaws stopped their sharp grinding on his inevitable cud of eating tobacco.

"Something stuck in your craw, Dan?" Lan asked with a soft smile.

"Yeah, Lan. I got bad news for you. Pete Renshaw's out an back..."

"Pete...Dan, I thought he was in for a whole year an' four months!" Lan exclaimed.

"He's out an' was here, boy, an' a mite chippy. He was askin' for you, an' he headed out, seemed like, on your trail."

"Packing a gun, Dan?"

"Not that I seen, son, but a grudge for sure. He ain't forgot it was you got him sent down on that beef-rustlin' charge... Well, that's the news; I figured to give it to you quick."

IT WAS disturbing news, not only because Pete Renshaw held a grudge against Lan, but because he was Lan's greatest rival for the capture of Tal. Renshaw spent most of his life in the spring, summer and fall, trapping out selected wild horse stock. It was while so engaged that he had rustled beef from Lan's small cow-herd, and another yearling from a big, neighboring spread. Lan was chief witness for the State when Pete had been tried.

"Best hook ol' Betsy to your hip from here on in, son," Bryson advised. "Your plans changed now?"

Lan had been staring off toward the west. He started and shook his head. "No, Dan. No change. I'm leaving as soon as I've eaten a bait, an' packed. I'm as close to Tal now as I ever could hope to be. On the other hand, Dan—there's that little chestnut mare. The pull will be strong... If she can't decoy him in to my trap then—well, I might as well give up."

Old Dan nodded agreement. He led Lan's sweated mount to unsaddle and feed, while Lan wheeled and strode to the house to start a fire and then get his equipment packed. Dan would have a fresh mount saddled for him, and a pack pony ready...

Later, as he ate slowly of fried sidemeat and baking powder biscuits, Lan's narrowed eyes stared off into nothingness. They shafted glinting lights as he visualized the horse-hunter, Renshaw, perhaps even now stealing up on that little boxed meadow....

Suddenly Lan started, finished a half cup of coffee at a gulp, and scraped back his chair. "That's it, Dan! Horses ready? My outfit packed?"

"All set, son... Take care now,

an'—the best of luck, Lanny boy. You've done a good job so far. All you got to watch out for now is Pete... Don't lose your haid."

His gnarled old fingers dug into Lan's arm and Lan flashed him a soft smile of gratitude as he reached for his hat.

Shifting his gun belt around more to his right flank, he stepped out and shortly was riding into the westering sun....

●

Lan cached his little pack roan as he neared the site of the capture. He wanted to make time; twice along the trail back he had picked up alien horse sign—the tracks of Pete Renshaw's mount.

Now he pulled up his bay as out of the heights came the strident cry of a wild stallion.

"Tal!"

Lan was sure, for he had long-since learned to identify the calls of both Manya and his flame-colt son. Tal's calls came as a further whetting to Lan's appetite for increased determination.

He watched the moon begin to shed its creamy light and start shadow shapes skipping about the brush-studded hills as he climbed.

Now he was close in on the little cul de sac, and his every nerve fibre grew taut and slack by turns. He listened for sounds from the little chestnut mare, but all was silent in the local area save for the sibilant hiss of a night breeze through the shuddering leaves of a quaking aspen clump...

Lan dismounted now, and ground-hitched his bay. The quiet was overwhelming as he stepped carefully along the rim of the high, long since disused, beaver dam.. And then he halted. He was staring, wide eyed, at the little mare.

She stood with arched back almost against the bole of a tree, subdued—perhaps after hours of battle to free herself. "It won't be long, baby," Lan whispered. "If all goes according to plan, I'll—"

The mare suddenly lunged against her snubbing ropes, and Lan started as he saw a shadowy man form stealing in. "Renshaw!"

Lan quivered with anger and excitement. He fisted his gun, and his knuckles gleamed white in the moonlight as he gripped the handle fiercely...

Then a wild scream came from the captive, and Lan saw Renshaw whip to one side. He was carrying a rope, and now he lunged and struck. The mare quivered, and Lan Davey's blood boiled. Renshaw had begun a taming of this wildling in his own ruthless way.

Lan coiled around a fringe of aspens, treading carefully as he moved toward the west, along the south bank of the draw. Now he halted, and his heart lunged each time he heard the sound of that rope striking, and the wild screams of the mare as she fought a losing battle.

Lan turned in. He hugged the decline with his back as he slid to the bottom, then he swung sharply, and his gun flashed. "Hold it, Renshaw!" he boomed.

PETE RENSHAW'S eyes glowed as they stared. His tall, angular

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form was sharply cut as spraddle-legged he faced Lan.

"Turn around," Lan ordered. "Go for your gun and I'll throw down on you. Around—Renshaw! That mare is mine... By law, you're about to try some more rustlin'..."

Renshaw hesitated no longer. His arms widened as his hands half-raised.

Lan moved in, slowly, alertly. He reached for Renshaw's gun but had scarcely whipped it from its holster when the big horse-hunter came back.

Lan had no chance to save himself as Renshaw's heavy angular shape drove him back to his hunkers. He tried to swing his right arm round in order to bring the barrel of his Colt down, but he rocked off balance and now Renshaw whipped over and clapped on a tight body scissors...

"It's come—like I hoped it would—nester," Renshaw said through his sharp breathing. "I'll take *your* gun now, an'—"

Lan's right hand was under his side. He tried to draw it out, but his forearm was gripped, then suddenly Renshaw drove a fist soggily into his face, almost blacking him out. "Let go that—iron—Davey, or I'll—"

Lan jerked his head as a thumb went for one of his eyes. Then his head cleared and he became sharply conscious of his predicament. Renshaw would stop at nothing now. Lan could hear his opponent's anger expressed in half sobbed grunts as again he drove his fist into Lan's face, this time splitting a lip.

Suddenly Lan tested out his right leg. He could move it. He began quickly to grind his boot heel into the turf, then all at once his body bridged, with all his sinuous strength. Renshaw made a grab for grass, and in that brief moment of opportunity, Lan rolled, and the horse-hunter spilled...

Lan holstered his gun as he regained his feet; no longer would he need it... As Renshaw came up to a crouch and catapulted forward Lan side-stepped, and swung in to loop a smashing left hand to the face. Renshaw sagged forward and Lan almost buried his right fist to the wrist in the other's stomach.

In the next fifteen minutes, while the little captive mare quivered with increasing fright near by, Lan Davey fought the fight of his life—*for* his life. He found a lot of fight still left in his opponent even after the first battering attack, but Lan's condition served him well, and at last he dropped Renshaw's face down on the turf.

"You'll hightail it as soon as you can stand on your feet," Lan said huskily as he breathed sharply on his battered knuckles... "If I have to, I'll chop you into hamburger..."

Renshaw did not hear, but later as he came out of the fog, to stare vacantly up into the bright moonlight, Lan repeated his threat. "Okay—okay, Davey." Renshaw's voice was scarcely audible. "Mebbe some other time. I'll be watchin'—both eyes open."

Lan stepped in threateningly and Renshaw held an arm over his face for protection but Lan did not strike.

He sat on his hunkers and watched Renshaw stagger out of the boxed meadow. But not for some time following did he turn and go for his own horse, to ride back and pick up the pack pony...

TWO DAYS went swiftly by. Lan worked feverishly to construct his pole trap. He was nervous the whole time, always alert for possible return of Renshaw, always afraid that the little chestnut might lose her charms as a decoy...

But Tal was never too far away. Lan heard him in the nights, and as he sat back with the wind in his favor tonight, he thrilled to the exchange of whinnied calls.

Loose in her corral, the little chestnut had ceased her attempts to escape. She poured out her cries, and suddenly Lan was thrilled when from the meadow bottom he caught the deep, throaty snuffles of the shy, handsome young stallion.

It was close to daylight, and Lan was shivering as he lay flat on his stomach in the dew-drenched grass, before at last he glimpsed Tal in all his handsome conformation. The wilding was moving, mincing along, along, head down, halting every now and then, to start nervously as he approached the narrow defile of poles...

Lan quivered and swallowed sharply from time to time, for his throat had become parched with the long-drawn period of suspense.

Now at a series of soft, seductive snuffles from the mare, Tal raised his head, tossed it grandiosely in savage majesty, and started down the defile...

"Go ahead—boy—" No sound came from Lan's throat, although his lips framed the words. There were left but about ten feet to go for the creeping stallion before the trip pole gate would crash behind him, when suddenly the mountain zone was awakened by the thunder of hoofbeats.

Lan glanced sharply up to the rimrock plateau shelf above, beyond, to glimpse Manya in full stride, at the rear of his fleeing band, and then the crash of a rifle shot blasted the area with ringing reverberations.

"Renshaw!" Lan sprang to his feet, for Tal had whirled and was in full lunging bounds into the open meadow.

Again a shot, and to Lan Davey's horror, he saw the big old stallion topside, stumble, to come pitching out over the rimrock...

Lan tried to call out in his anger and anguish, but no sound came as he rushed across the meadow flat to the point at which Manya lay thrashing.

He half turned to glimpse, now and then, flashes of Tal as the young stallion tore ground up into the gorge...

Now with a throaty roar, old Manya came to his feet. He stood quivering a moment or so, then with a terrific scream, he lunged.

Lan darted to the cover of brush, but Manya had stumbled, and now

★ **It looked like the old, old story of the cattle baron determined not to lose his holdings, and driving out the nesters who had come in to homestead. But Lon and Johnny Carroll had the feeling that there was something else, something bigger than mere land behind Dixon's determination to get rid of them!** ★

don't miss this book-length novel

RAIDERS OF WHITE PINE

by Lee Floren

it leads off the big May issue of

WESTERN ACTION

with the dread scent of the man strong in his fluted nostrils, he wheeled, but as he broke away, he limped badly.

"Poor ol' feller," Lan breathed softly. "Reckon you sprained a pastern badly in that fall..."

He tightened his hold on his six gun, and cast a glance upwards, as if to hope for a glimpse of Renshaw. He realized that out of sheer spite Renshaw had ridden up to haze the band into stampede, and thus foil Lan's chances for capture of the coveted Tal...

●

TAL REJOINED the band some three miles farther to westward.

The sun rose to splash the sweated, exhausted wild band. Old Mog was down, breathing heavily, but Tal was head high, standing again like a piece of carven sculpture as he searched wind for enemy sign...

He was still poised on the slab rock when Lan Davey next glimpsed him, close to dusk. During the sunset hour, Lan had listened to the husky whinnies of little Mog, calls to Manya her chieftain, but there was no answering bugle, and the man sensed that Manya, crippled, and old, would no longer return to the band...

There was a sudden wild scream and the man watched the young flame stallion wheel. "Cougar—again!"

Lan started the climb. Grabbing at mesquite roots, or greasewood clumps in order to draw himself up onto the rimrock, and shortly he was hunkered down watching Tal in all his powerful wild majesty, hurl himself into battle.

No longer was the big, powerful Manya at hand. Lan, the senior colt of the band, was its chief defensive force and suddenly the watching man lost all his desire, his obsession, for the capture of his savage wildling now battling almost alone, save for the help the jaded old Mog could lend...

Twice Lan raised his gun as he saw a stealthy big cat form swing in about the huddled band, but each time, either Mog or Tal whipped about... and then the man gasped, as out of a wild fruit thicket stalked Acheeta, the queen cougar.

Up came Lan's gun. The range was long, but at least he could scare off the big cats with a few rapid-fire shots, but his finger had scarcely taken up first pressure when with a terrible scream, Tal half reared, swapped ends, and lashed out with a speed that not even the sinuous Acheeta could match...

Lan watched her long, crippled body pitch out over the rimrock, to spin in empty air before the soggy crash to the rocky bottom below...

Tal whirled and throated a hoarse cry as he minced to the very lip of the rimrock, and now he flung his head high and down the valley there rang his declaration of kingship, the proclamation of his wild coronation...

Lan Davey backed off, a slow smile toying with his mouth...

Shortly, he was shifting poles down at the trap corral.

He now swung around and started flicking out his rope. The little mare cowered in a corner, but suddenly her ears pricked sharply forward as again the wild cry of King Tal sounded.

With a throaty little scream, she rose and lunged and Lan Davey's smile widened as he watched her gallop the length of the meadow draw...

"Just keep out of Renshaw's way, baby," he called softly, and added: "That goes for you, too—King Tal."

Shrugging he turned, to move slowly back to his horses. He would remain here a day at the wilds, as he scouted for Renshaw's trail. Renshaw must be hazed out of the zone altogether, for Lan was now determined that Tal should have every opportunity to enjoy his kingship as befitted him...

All was locally still, but away to westward, Tal snuffled softly, encouragingly, to the handsome little chestnut mare as eagerly she climbed to join her royal mate...

★

SLIM'S SUNDAY SUIT

This outfit Slim bought was unbelievable, but it couldn't be guaranteed — for a good reason!

By Rex Whitechurch

Slim's beginning to wonder if he can breathe much longer, as he feels his vest about to burst.

SLIM HAZELWOOD fisted his big hands in the hip pockets of his overalls. The gangling cowboy then gazed at us in the bunkhouse, chomped on his tobacco a minute, spat querulously, then chewing some more, spoke with his jaws moving up and down rhythmically: "I'm ridin' into Sunup tonight to buy myself a suit of clothes. I aim to pay as much as twenty dollars if I have to; mebbe I'll go twenty-five. I've got to have somethin' respectable to go with this here seven-dollar shirt I'm wearin'; it don't match up none too well with denim."

"You'd better make haste, Slim," I said. "You can see how it's puckerin' up to rain, an' I reckon that fence-rail of a cayuse you call Lightning, ain't goin' to remove none of the hazards. You'd better take along

a bumbershoot because from what I've seen of you on bathday, I don't figger you've got webbed feet."

The boys who were hunkered around the bunkhouse of the Little P began to laugh and look gawky at one another. They caught on right quick, knowin' that the single express purpose of that there sudden buyin'-streak Slim's spoken about had behind it the lean puncher's high-toned notion that the winsome widder McHoany could do right well with a sparrin' pardner, and was scheming in his head how if he was to dress up in fancy duds he would knock her off a limb the first try like shootin' crows. Of course, none of us envied him; the widder, as we saw it, had a face like an Injun pony. But you know what they say about love bein' blind.

Well, Cookie hammered the brass triangle in the cottonwood and we all made a beeline for the chuck-house, Slim fetchin' up the rear because he wasn't over-fond of the Chinaman's cookin'.

We got next to the whole thing when Slim, before he left the Little P table, pushed his tinplate of navy beans back and turned up his nose at them. He was plainly not in a mood favorable to Cookie.

"Me," he added on top of what he'd said about buyin' a new suit of clothes, "I'm dawg-tired of Oriental-cooked food. I want some home-cookin', th' kind that fills you up pleasant-like an' don't cause you no stummickache after you've et it. I want pies an' cakes an' fried chicken, or b'iled chicken, with dressin' or with dumplings. There ain't nobody can cook an' bake like a female. It was intended that wimmin-folks do th' cookin' an' th' pie-bakin', so that a man might live to reach a ripe old age an' never have no ulcers, nor no indigestion, nor gas on his stummick. If she makes bakin'-powder biscuits she knows enough not to use a whole can of bakin'-powder or bakin'-sody on a puny little pan of flour. She knows furthermore how to put in an' stir up th' flavorin' so that when them biscuits is done they come out of th' oven a golden brown, delicious and palatable morsels of luscious eatin', fit for a king or a hard-workin' husband. It is all because she was intended by the good Lord Almighty to keep a man in fine physikal condition, an' there ain't no stummick ailments goin' to overtake a man that eats his victuals out of a woman's delicate hand."

I scratched my head and peered at him curiously, not knowin' how long he had been studyin' about th' differences betwixt a man's cookin' and that of a woman who really did have the edge in her favor, but there was somethin' more in a kind and loving piece of calico that lured Slim away from his common hoss-sense and filled him with high-falutin' ideas. To such an extent that I had begun to wonder—Slim movin' me that way—if my forty years of bachelorhood wasn't, after all, plumb and tetotally in vain. Had I missed some of the seven wonders of the world?

"Meanin', Slim, by your beautiful and inspiring words, that you are goin' to find yourself a woman cook and sock-darner?"

"Cook an' back-warmer." Slim rose to his full skinny height of six feet and six inches, and he stood with his fingers tented on the oilcloth of the table, swallowing, his big apple slidin' up and down in his skeleton neck like a ball of fat with a string fastened to it, such as Cookie kept hangin' on a nail beside the kitchen cookstove for skillet-greasin'.

"Ha, ho," exclaimed Shorty McClain, "it's the widder, what's-her name—McHoany, I'll bet a silver dollar."

We all sat up, and those that didn't laugh grinned like a pair of monkeys locked up in a roaster full of shelled peanuts.

As I said, Slim Hazelwood was a patient fellow, or did I tell you that? He didn't get mad, and these qualifications are what made us like him a

heap. He wasn't the best cowhand, if you didn't consider his ropin'—there he was the best of the outfit. Now, as it appeared, Slim was swinging his expert loop and aimin' it at Widder McHoany's head.

I GOT TO thinkin' about Slim Hazelwood's hip-roofed sorrel hoss, with one good eye and one that wasn't so good. There was absolutely nothin' known to mankind that could stop him if he took a notion to do better than the lazy lope which was his customary pace, and if he set his head to run, there wasn't nothin' known to mankind that could catch him. If he took that notion, and Slim caught on in time, the cowboy just yelled out at the top of his lungs and slapped old King Tut (Slim's Sunday name for his cayuse), in the immediate vicinity or squarely upon the endgate of his vehicle with his hat, and the contest was on.

If, on the other hand, Slim did not catch on in time, Old Tut went on alone, leavin' his former rider ensconced on the seat of his levis and shakin' a furious fist at the fleein', wing-sproutin' steed.

We watched him tighten the cinches of his heavy Spanish saddle after dinner. He had paid all of two hundred and sixty-five dollars for that saddle, buyin' it second-hand. It was a circus saddle. Slim had engaged an itinerant artist to paint bunches of gay flowers on it in gaudy colors like cherry red, and passionate yellow—not to mention the daubs of gold and silver, and mushmellon pink, as well as some other lively tints we ain't never heard of. This artwork had set him back another twenty-five dollars; and countin' his bridle, with all the hammered metal do-dads on it, he had about four hundred and fifty dollars invested in his ridin' gear.

He rode off on King Tut, and it was hard to tell which one of them looked the laziest as they moved slowly down the trail toward the town of Sunup.

The widder conducted a boarding house in our trading town. Slim had been gone about thirty minutes, and we all were sitting around in the bunkhouse tryin' to amuse ourselves, but not talking none, when Shorty McClain happened to stick his head out of a winder to spit and yanked his head back in right quick, with the comment that it had begun to rain. "Sounds like the Niagara Falls," he said.

And Slim would wear his new suit! I chuckled, knowing there wasn't nothin' this side of the jumpin'-off place that would keep him from dressin' up the minute he could find somethin' that would fit his gangling form.

"Goin' to be a hard job locatin' somethin' to hide all of his nakedness," Shorty said, gimlettin' me with his smart eyes. I figured he had just about read my mind. "I shore like to see Old Slim courtin' th' widder."

"He's shore tryin' to get th' loop over her head," spoke up Texas Knight. He was pickin' his mandolin, with his chair tipped back against the dobe wall, a cigaret hangin' from his mouth.

"He should've taken that there moosic-box of yours with him," Fat Schooler opined. "Only there ain't no romance stars showin' except them that Slim thinks he sees in the widder's eyes."

"He's got a big imagination, if he can see anything in her eyes except fried chicken an' bread puddin'," Shorty said.

WELL, WE found out from Slim Hazelwood the next day what happened. Slim told it this way, while crammin' in the navy beans and the bakin'-powder biscuits, the same which last night he turned his snoot up at and pushed away from him.

"You know, I told you I was headin' for Sunup to buy me a new suit," he began, "an' when I got there they was all standin' around in th' street, an'

on th' sidewalks, talkin' about th' pie supper at th' church. I know th' widder will be waitin', because she is th' best pie-baker this side of Kansas City, an' she kinda likes to show off with her kitchen genius, as she calls it. I stop at Abe Rosenthal's store, *General Gent's Furnishing's,* an' Abe shows me several suits that he had just got shipped in from Noo York. But it ain't no dice; he hauls out his tape-line an' measures me, then he scratches his head like he just can't believe what th' tape-line tells him. Then he ducks down an' measures my pants again. I'm in a hurry. I don't want to keep th' widder waitin', an' Abe's bound and determined I ain't to get outa there till he makes a sale. He must've fetched out somethin' like two dozen suits.

"Abe claims all these clothes are Noo York special made-to-measure hand-tailored suits, but he's sorta worried because, after tryin' 'em on he sees they are too short in the pants. I'm growin' worse every minute, bein' in a toot, an' none of them garments goin' on to me like they should. Besides, th' sleeves of them come down about ten inches up from my wrists. I begin to worry, too, but Abe's like a turkey with his head on the choppin' block. He mops sweat out of his eyes an' off his head, an' th' top of the head has turned th' color of my undershirt—betwixt that an' th' color of my seven-dollar silk shirt which I am wearin' at th' time.

"After around a half-hour, when I'm all tuckered out from skinnin' them clothes on an' peelin' 'em off again, Abe suddenly busts out in a grin that shows he ain't got a tooth in his head. It's real sudden-like, an' my hopes have begun to soar aloft like a buzzard with a tender chicken in its beak, only I ain't hopin' too much. I'm afeared he's comin' up with th' idea of splicin' on some goods at th' bottom of th' pants, an' I know I ain't goin' to be sucked in on nothin' like that. But he's got an altogether different idea in mind.

"'Slim,' he says, holdin' th' tape-line in his left hand an' th' hand restin' on his hip, 'I have just this minute thought of somethin', an' I figger it's th' best piece of good luck either one of us has ever had in our lifetimes. Th' other day, just after I have opened up in the mornin', a fellow comes in here that's been gone almost ten years, an' he tells me his suit's for sale.'

"Then Abe tells me th' fellow says he's got to eat an' he's got to sleep an' he's got to drink. 'So because it's a scream of a suit, an' a Noo York special, I offer him ten dollars for same. Mind you, Slim, I want that suit because I ain't never before seen nothin' like it, not as long as I've been in Gent's Furnishings. He tells me if I give him twelve, he'll deal. I have to toss in a pair of overalls to boot.

"'He's a tall fellow—mebbe half an inch taller than you—*as* tall as you anyway. I think I've got your fit. This man tells me before we do business that he ain't worn th' suit but three days an' that's been on th' train where it ain't had no chance to get dirty. 'Course I had it cleaned an' pressed, an' it bein' almost a new suit mebbe you don't mind too much if it's kinda second-handed. Anyhow, though, it's th' last straw, Slim.'

"IT SURE is a good lookin' outfit, but I don't know about th' wearin' quality. Abe says he won't guarantee it none, because it ain't good business, he says, when he's lettin' me have a seventy-five dollar suit for th' small an' shameful sum of twenty dollars, on th' barrel-top. It's a gray—kinda th' color of a turtle dove—an' it's got stripes runnin' up an' down it, which are of a little darker shade than th' rest of th' cloth. It's three pieces—coat, vest an' pants. I dicker a little, tryin' to get Abe to shave off three dollars, but it ain't no dice.

"Boy, am I proud of that suit! It sure goes good with my seven-dollar

shirt an' my twenty-dollar Stetson hat. I try th' suit on, an' if th' pants wasn't a little too tight around th' waist, I'd have a perfect fit. I figger, though, I won't eat so much, an' by trimmin' down some, I'll look like one of them play-actor fellows you see in th' theatre. So I pay Abe th' twenty dollars, actin' not too much pleased, just so he won't think he can sell me anythin' else, an' I strut over to th' *Elite Saloon.*

"You should've seen them look at me; they sure look me over. They're all wantin' to buy me a drink, an' two of 'em just keep stompin' around me, sizin' me up an' down, an' fingerin' th' cloth of my new suit. Finally, Ed Doolin, owner of th' *Elite,* he says: 'Th' drinks are on th' house. Step up, gents, an' wet your whistles.'

"There's a rush, an all th' customers line up at th' bar, except for Missouri Pete Tuttle an' Dodge City John Hardin'. Pete combs his handle-bar mustache with a thick finger an' looks me over again. He turns round then an' his gaze travels down them faces at th' bar. Most of them has got their cheeks puffed out an' are blowin' suds.

" 'Gents," Pete says, " 'it's a hand-tailored outfit an' it must've cost Slim anywheres from seventy-five dollars to a hundred an' fifty dollars. I swear I never saw nothin' like it; it beats what Wild Bill Hickok an' Diamond Jim Brady was laid out in. Let's run Slim Hazelwood for mayor of Sunup come th' next election. Why, he can get up at them banquits an' look just as big as th' mayor of San Francisco, an' ain't you all heard how it's th' clothes that makes th' man?' "

SLIM LOOKS over at the plate of navy beans, and seein' they ain't right plentiful, he reaches out his long arm for another helpin'. He's sure a hungry man, an' nothin' like he was last night when he had a taste for nothin' but woman-baked pie You couldn't have told he was th' same man except for his skinny height. He's goin' in for navies once again, an' I figure there ain't nothin' more healthful to a hard-ridin' cowboy than navy beans. But I'm commencin' to realize that there has been a grave an' heart-breakin' tragedy in Slim Hazelwood's life since he rode old King Tut off down th' trail to Sunup last night an' waved at us all, grinnin' fit to be tied.

"Well, pardners," Slim resumes, knifin' in them navies, "it's like this: I'm flabbergasted when I takes a peek in th' back-bar lookin' glass. There's a man there that I ain't never seen before, lookin' out of that glass at me. He's a drummer, this here stranger is, an' he 'pears kinda foreign. I lifts my shoulders an' he lifts his; I hoist my chin an' he does th' same. Then I know it's me; there ain't no mistake about it. An' I buy a round of drinks for th' men in th' *Elite.* I give a toast an' say I appreciate how they've admired my new clothes, but allow I'm th' same range-ridin', lassoo-in' hombre that they have always knowed, an' that a new suit of clothes —even if they're th' best money can buy, ain't big enough to turn my head none. After that, I turns to th' door an' amble out into th' street, on across th' board sidewalk an' head for th' widder's house, feelin' like two billion dollars."

Here, Slim pauses again an' he drops his head and it seems he's having trouble clearin' his throat so that the words he's holding back will get out clear and plain. A fellow's throat gets mighty dry sometimes. When he looks up after a catfish highball, and he's set the water glass down again, he lifts his eyes to mine. I observe his eyes are worried and mebbe a little bit misty.

"She's there waitin'," he resumes, "an' she loads me down with a stack of pies. By now my new suit is pinchin' me in some parts, an' I'm kinda afeard if I set down too sudden my suspenders will bust off th' buttons. But I ain't right sure I've got 'em hitched up too tight. I'm

just hopin' that's what's th' matter; th' reason they're too snug in th' settin'-down quarter.

"Th' widder, she's all dressed up in her Sunday clothes, a big-flowered calico dress with a breast-pin that shines like a lantern on th' bottom of an empty well. I ain't never before see her lookin' so purty as she stacks up at this very minute, an' I stand there with th' pies piled up high in both arms an' my chin clamped down on th' top one so none of them can slide out an' splatter on th' floor. So there I am, admirin' her an' seein' all them Texas stars in her eyes an' rose dew on her lips. I know th' church is offerin' strong competition to th' *Elite* an' that th' wimmin-folks are bound they'll make th' supplies hold out longer in th' saloons, an' that th' saloon's brethern will walk straighter when they go to work. I ain't objectin' none, an' we walk out across th' street from th' boardin' house in a light sprinkle of rain. It's about six blocks—as you fellows know—to th' church; before we get halfway th' rain has perked up an' is comin' down hard an' furious, an' swishin' at us. My new suit is takin' it all in good spirits, but I'm sure gettin' soaked down to my flannels. Besides, it has turned cool an' I'm kinda glad I'm wearin' th' vest, even though it needs some slack in it.

"But if it's cool outside th' same can't be said of th' basement room of th' church-house where they're holdin' th' pie supper. I ask th' widder if she minds if I take off my coat an' vest. She peers at me, an' puts a plump finger in one of them dimples an' says kinda poeticakally. " 'Slim, that new suit makes you look like a gentleman that I ain't never seen before, an' I'm kinda proud of you. If you don't mind I wish you'd keep 'em on, so I can show you off to th' wimmin I know who are here with their pies.'

"THAT SETTLES it. I set down carefully at th' table. I ain't had time to put no slack in my suspenders, but it ain't altogether them that's causin' th' trouble; there ain't no looseness in th' hindpart of my britches. Besides, th' waistband of them pants is cuttin deep into my stummick, an' th' vest is beginnin' to shut off my wind. Before I've et two pieces of th' widder's pie, I'm about th' most miserable galoot in that whole room of menfolks.

"But I've sure made a hit, an' all them wimmin are askin' me to try their pies—th' married ones, an' them ladies that ain't never had th' pleasure. I must've et fourteen or fifteen slabs, all th' way from chocolate to vinegar pie, an' I'm bustin' an' strainin' against th' buttons on my pants an' on my vest. I'm afeard if I eat one more piece I'll blow them buttons into th' faces of th' other pie-eaters; they'll shoot out from me like buckshot from a sawed-off shotgun.

"But them buttons are holdin'. I don't know it then, but they're about th' holdingest buttons that was ever sewed onto a man's suit. It seems so long ago since I come in here, but I wind up tryin' to raise myself up off th' hard wooden bench at th' table. I'm full of pie an' full of sorrow. I ain't sick none at my stummick, but I'm all squeezed in an' shut off; it's like tryin' to push a watermelon into a one-pound paper bag, just gettin' up on my feet in that new suit.

"Mind you, I ain't none sorry of th' bargain I made with Abe Rosenthal for th' clothes; I'm just mad at myself for stuffin' ontil I ain't got no more shape than a haystack. That's it. I heave a large sigh, standin' there because I ain't busted nothin' as yet. Th' pies have been good eatin'; th' sweets was satisfyin'; they're somethin' my soul an' body have been cravin' but of course they ain't goin' to keep me goin' forever; it takes beans an' beef to do that. I'm feelin' kinda downcast an' wish you was all here with me an' full of pie, too. But there's one thing I'm sure of—you

ain't sufferin' none because you've outgrowed your clothes.

"Th' widder takes a notion I ought to shake hands with everybody an' she's givin' th' announcement to th' storekeeper to read off th' paper how we've become engaged. But I feel awful uncomfortable when th' hand-wringin' starts. The worst part of it is when two little children with blue ribbons in their hair comes up an' hold out their tiny hands an' I have to bend clean over to take them little paws in mine.

"There! That's it! That's what does it! I feel suddenlike a cold, a tormentin' draft that's comin' in at th' door, with th' rain mixed up in it like a lemon in lemonade, an th' cold air hits me about an inch or so below th' bottom of th' back of my coat. There's just a gentle tearin' sound, an' I'm sure ain't nobody heard it but me. You know, though, how you feel when somethin' happens of an embarrassin' nature you're scared other's have found out about, you know how it's right abusin' to your pride.

"I back out of that church-house basement, bowin', with th' widder backin' out, too, although there ain't no reason that I can see why she does. Mebbe she thinks I'm puttin' on airs to please her, only I know it's a case of bare necessity with me; an' I'm doin' a good job of play-actin'.

"TH' RAIN'S fallin' harder than a ton of concrete an' it's enough to drown a whale, when we come out of th' church-house, an' I'm thinkin' of my new suit an' my new suit's thinkin' about me. I'm thinkin' too, of th' twenty dollars of my money that Abe Rosenthal's got in his pants pocket. But I capture a feelin' like th' one General Custer surely must've captured when he saw th' Injuns comin' in th' valley of th' Little Big Horn an' stood his ground.

"'We ain't neither sugar nor salt,' says th' widder; we can take it, Slim. Water never hurt nobody.'

"'Only them that didn't get on th' ark', I say, downhearted.

"'You sure looked a hero tonight,' Widder McHoany says. 'I'm sure enough proud of you, so proud I can't hardly wait for th' church bells to start ringin', come next June.'

"You know, it's all in th' way you feel about hard luck. I'm takin' it with a grin, figgerin' there ain't much of anything I can do about th' weather. But I'm gettin' colder an' colder behind me, an' I calculate th' tear must have growed considerable an' must still be spreadin'. It's ambitious an' wants to make a good showin'.

"I have begun to think that my pants-cuffs are creepin' up on me an' my vest is drawin' up in fear of bein' overtook, an' that my coat tail is comin' up to kinda protect my vest.

"We reach th' first wooden awning over th' sidewalk, an' th' widder takes another notion. 'Slim,' she says, 'let's step in at Felstein's General Store. I'm plannin' on doin' some more pie-bakin' tomorrer, an' I'm clean out of cane sugar.'

"Now it must've been Old Nick that put th' notion in her head, because it couldn'tve been born of th' higher realms where everything is good and pure an' there ain't no schemin' how to get a fellow in trouble, th' way I understand it. But Old Nick's always on th' job to make things hot for them that he happens to think about at a particular time of day or night, rain or shine. I'm allowin' for a proud an' vainful widder's faults, an' mebbe Old Nick ain't havin' no hand in it at all; an' I'm allowin' for them that keep their heads so high they can't see a hole in th' ground. Anyhow, no matter how th' notion come to her nor why, I find myself followin' her an' doin' my best to perform to her entire satisfaction. We step into Felstein's store an' of course, it bein' Saturday night, th' big room's full of customers who are buyin' their week's supplies.

I stand close up against th' drygoods counter feelin' th' hole in my britches growin' more industrious ever' minute.

"I ain't exertin' myself none, an' even pushin' up my right hand to shake with somebody that's well pleased to learn of th' impendin' weddin' at th' church-house, because th' widder has told 'em all that she has become engaged, why even that exertion of reachin' out my hand, causes a squeezin' sensation in my armpits. I peer down an' see th' coat has crawled up on me ontil th' bottom of it is just about an inch below th' bottom hem of my vest. Th' dadratted heat in th' room from all th' close-pressed bodies had already causin' my coat to crawl up my back an' stummick like a suddenly let-loose winder shade.

"I gaze down slow an' casual-like at my pants an' then I have a cold feelin' that's just about all I can bear. From about two inches below my knees upward I'm all right, but down beyond that I'm as naked as a picked rooster. It's somebody away back yonder in th' far distance of th' back of th' room who starts th' laughin'. I don't know who he is, but he's got a laugh that sounds like a little boy hammerin' on a dishpan with a big wooden ladel, an' I reckon th' laughter of that Philistine is what breeds them little eggs of laughter which start explodin' an' hatchin all over th' store. They're all doin' it, you never heard nothin' like it. They're pop-eyed an' open-mouthed an' some of them are cryin' because they've had their funnybones tickled as they ain't never been tickled before. Some of them wimmin are hoppin' up an' down an' clappin' their hands, mebbe just because they see th' widder's feathers fallin' an', because they have been hopin' they would someday. I am made to feel that my clothes ain't coverin' no spot of me bigger than a postage stamp. Th' suit's stranglin' me; it's got all th' side holds an' catch-as-catch-can grips known to a wrestler, an' I'm goin' down an' down an' down, while my britches are creepin' up an' up. My vest is hittin' me in th' clinches.

"HAVE YOU ever seen a mortified woman? Have you read in th' Bible how a fellow named Lot had a wife that looked back behind her and turned into a pillar of salt? Well, that's what the widder done; she took one look at me an' she turned into salt or somethin' equal as bad. She just stood lookin', with all th' stars gone from her eyes.

She begins to cry, she cries so loud she stops all th' laughin'; they stop laughin' at me. After that, it ain't a minute ontil she has sprouted wings an' took off, soarin' straight out th' door, without her feet even touchin' the floor more than twice at most. Th' rain don't drive her back.

"Me? I'm left leanin' there, alone, like a little boy in Buster Brown clothes, an' my spirits are about as high as th' short spittoon in th' *Elite Saloon*. On top of everything else, I'm scared to turn around an' make a dash for liberty, for perched on a cracker barrel is th' two-gun marshal of Sunup, Bad Breath Barnes, with his six-shooters draggin' down a belt that's got enough ammunition in it to hold off a band of Injuns. I get to recollectin' there's a law that says you must be fully clothed when appearin' in public onless you're in South Africa or somewheres where they don't wear nothin' but jewelry.

"If I live to be one hundred an' ninety-five years old, I ain't never, never goin' to forget th' experience. I want to cuss an' I want to cry. I'm in a cussin' mood, but I don't do nothin' for about two or three minutes, only sweat ontil th' water's drippin' from my chin like it runs out of a hole in a water bucket an' wettin' my shirt collar till th' collar becomes a piece of hemp with a noose in it; an' then, Mister Felstein, who has laughed so hard his eyes are blurred with tears that ain't from th' heart,

tosses me an Injun blanket. I drape this around my figger an' all I need now is a feather in my hat to collect myself a goverment allotment. I shoulder open th' door, with stiffened dignity, knowin' they can't see no more of me but that which is respectable. Then I stomp out into th' pourin' rain, full of pie an' full of brimstone, satisfied because no longer am I exposed to ridicule.

"But there is yet more to come. I find Old King Tut. He's protected because I put him under th' edge of th' awnin' in front of the feed store an' th' rain has missed him, an' th' water runnin' off th' slanted roof about two feet beyond him, an' he's standin' there snoozin', his jughead lowered like he's got his snout buried in oats or somethin'. But he must've knowed my walk, for he straightens up right quick, takes one squint at me an' then, evidently, mistakes me for Chief Rain-In-Th'-Face, because it's a sure thing he don't know who I am. Th' blanket an' my droopin' figger is enough to fool him. He starts in then to make matters all th' worse, rearin' up an' swingin' at me an' dancin' on his hind legs as far as th' halter will let him go, an' th' way he's swingin' is like he's wearin' boxin' gloves.

"I DUCK A right throwed out straight from th' shoulder, an' I dodge a left that's a haymaker if it lands. That hoss ain't foolin' none. Finally I run around him, callin' his name an' he subsides, with a whistlin' in his chest an' a snortin' through his nostrils that scares me ontil I'm shakin' all over.

"I manage to get him ontied, watchin' him th' same as he's watchin' me, an' when I'm bendin' down to ontie th' rope from th' hitch rail, he acts up again. He takes a bite at me an' his teeth clamp shut like a giant pair of calipers just about two inches from me. But I'm suspectin' somethin' of th' kind an' jump forward four or five feet an' get th' wind knocked out of me against th' railin'. I whirl an' shake my finger at him an' he shakes his head at me, an' he's quiverin' all over, with mebbe now complete recognition dawnin' on him. I creep forward, steppin' over th' blanket which has dropped in th' mud. I climb up in th' saddle, an' me an' Tut head for home, to th' Little P.

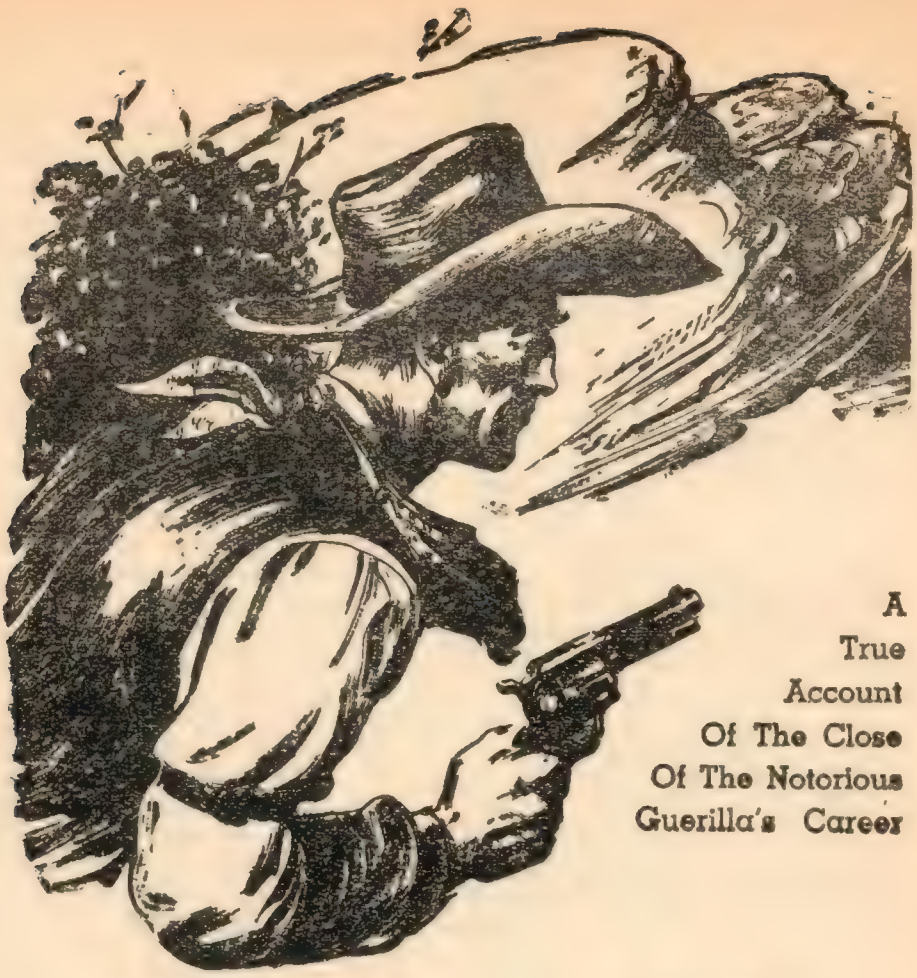
"Th' rain's still fallin' an' I'm drenched. No matter, though, I shed th' coat, an' I ain't never felt so much relief in my life. Purty soon I skin off th' vest. I heave it as far away from me as I can throw it with my good hoss-shoe pitchin' arm. I'm now down to th' pants, feelin' more relief than I've felt since I was a small baby, but I decide to wait before shuckin' th' britches ontil I'm on th' outside of th' city limits.

"That's about all of it," Slim says, reachin' out again for another helpin' of navies which he brings up to his mouth, lined up like little soldiers on his knife an' not spillin' a single one. "That's it, except for one thing. I unbutton them britches all th' way down, to th' last notch, but I don't throw 'em away. But when I open my eyes this mornin', I see them first thing, decoratin' th' foot of my bunk. I haul 'em into me. I gaze critically at th' shrunken size of 'em an' know they ain't never goin' to fit me again. An' while I'm at this I make an important discovery. It just about explains th' whole thing. Pasted on one of th' pocket linings in pen writin' is th' followin' words:

I was given this suit when let out of th' penitentiary where I served nine years for train robbery, an' because I'm plannin' on sellin' same, an' because I know some poor hombre will buy th' suit, I hereby wish to warn him. Whenever you go out an' it looks like rain, just be shore an' take a razor along with you, or a sharp similiar instrument so you won't be kilt by strangulation.

Signed: One-Eye Dan Bailey.

★



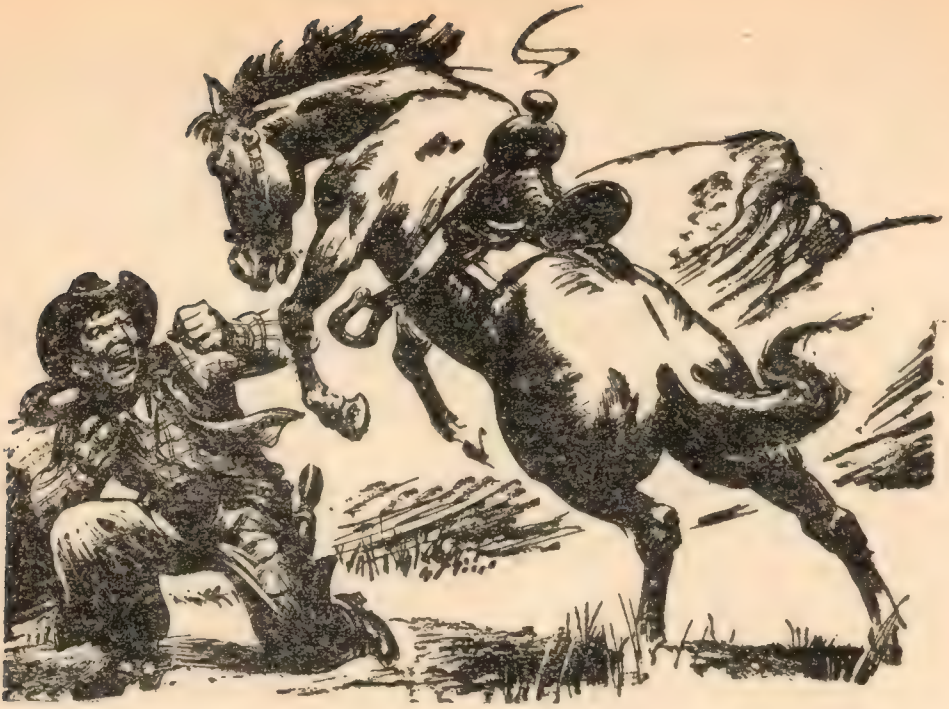
A True Account Of The Close Of The Notorious Guerilla's Career

Quantrill's Last Stand

By James Hines

THE DISINTEGRATION of the guerilla gang under the command of William Clark Quantrill started in the early months of 1864, while the gang was in the vicinity of Sherman, Texas, where they had fled from Missouri, when the Union forces had begun to make things a little too warm for the free-booters.

Trouble between Quantrill and his officers arose, and he and one of his captains, the notorious "Boody Bill" Anderson, engaged in a shooting scrape. George Todd, another of



Quantrill's captains, also had an argument with his chief; trouble of a serious nature was only averted by the intercession of other members of the command.

Dissension was rife. Quantrill was rapidly losing control over the wild bunch, and finally reached such a stage that the gang split up. Quantrill decided to take those of the men who were still faithful to him as their commander and return to Missouri.

Those who decided to remain with Todd and Anderson in Texas did so, while Quantrill with his depleted command started back to his former stamping ground in Missouri. No doubt, he saw the handwriting on the wall, and realized that the downfall of the Confederacy was only a matter of months; he knew, also, that his partisan soldiers would have but little, if any, chance of being treated as prisoners of war, if surrendered or captured in Missouri. It was his idea to endeavor to take some of his men who would make the trip, South and Southeast, with him through Kentucky in an effort to effect a junction with the forces of General Robert E. Lee, the "Lion of the Confederacy."

Quantrill knew that if his command was surrendered as a part of General Lee's forces, they would stand a much better chance, than if forced to lay down their arms in Missouri, or elsewhere. He figured rightly that swift and summary justice would be meted out to him and his men if they fell into the hands of the Union troops West of the Mississippi River. In this conjecture, Quantrill was no doubt right; therefore, the object of his march in Kentucky became evident.

Some writers and historians go so far as to attribute an entirely different motive to Quantrill in taking his command into Kentucky. It is alleged by some that his ultimate object was to march his command straight through to Washington and either assassinate or either assist in the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln.

Quantrill was a visionary and a

dare-devil type of fellow. Of that, there can be no doubt, but he was also an exceptionally intelligent and clever troop-commander. It is hardly conceivable that he would have agreed to participate in such a hair-brained scheme—one where the chance of success was about one in a thousand.

THE START of Quantrill and his small band from Missouri, was made from the vicinity of Independence, Jackson County, Missouri, about the middle of December 1864.

It was a matter of record that the winter of 1864 was an extremely severe one, and the men of Quantrill's band must have suffered terribly on their long ride through Missouri, into Arkansas, and on into Kentucky.

The command crossed the Mississippi River on New Year's Day, January 1, 1865. The crossing of the river being made at a place called Pacific, but also known as "Devil's Bend" or "Devil's Elbow," and situated about fifteen miles above Memphis, Tennessee.

Quantrill's original command was probably at its maximum strength at the time of the Lawrence, Kansas, raid and massacre on August 20, 1863. At that time the command under Quantrill is said to have numbered three hundred, all told. One hundred of them were known to have been chosen from Quantrill's tried and trusted guerillas; the others in the raid were picked from Price's most desperate Texas Rangers.

Among those known to have been in the party that made the trip into Kentucky with the guerilla chieftain in 1865 were some twenty-five or thirty men. Those men known to have been along were: Sylvester "Ves" Akers, John Baker, Jim Lilly, Jack Bishop Bill Basham, Dick Burns, Bill Gaw, Dick Glasscock, Bob Hall, Ike Hall, Bill Hulse, Chark Hockensmith, Frank James, James Little, John McCorkle, Lee McMurty, Ed Noland, Bill Noland, Allen Parmer, John Ross and James Younger. This totals twenty-one men. It is also known that seven others were of the party of guerillas that left Missouri with Quantrill, and that separated from him at Pochontas, Arkansas, and proceeded into Texas to rejoin the guerillas near Sherman under Todd and Anderson. These seven were James Cummins, the two Hudspeth brothers, Babe and Rufus, Jesse W. James, George Shepherd, and Oliver Shepherd, his cousin.

There is little for the writer or historian to go on, as to the direct route followed by Quantrill and his men on their march from Missouri, through part of Arkansas and Tennessee and on into the Bluegrass State.

On Sunday, January 22, 1865, Quantrill and his gang of free-booters, numbering some twenty-five or thirty men arrived at Hartford, the county seat of Ohio County, Kentucky. Hartford is in what is known as the Green River country.

Rose Autry, an old lady-friend of mine, once told me about Quantrill and his band stopping at the home of her father when she was a little girl. She lived on what is known as the "Big Bend" on Green River, near Hartford. She said that the gang went out and killed some deer and that they showed daring feats of horseback riding and pistol shooting.

There are all kinds of stories told of the operation of Quantrill in Kentucky and that it is sometimes rather difficult to evaluate them at their true worth. The visit to Hartford by the guerillas resulted in drunken riding through the streets and general terrorization of the citizenry.

ON FEBRUARY 28, 1865, a large body of men—said to have been Quantrill and his men—assisted by those of "One-Arm" Berry, and including members of Sue Mundy's band of murders, thieves, and robbers, plundered the town of Hickman, Kentucky, burning considerable property, mistreating and shooting men, women, and children, and taking away with

them booty and plunder of considerable value. On the same day Quantrill made a raid on Chaplintown, Kentucky.

On February 29th, of the same month, they were at Danville, Kentucky, where the inhabitants of the town were lined up and held under guard while the bandits looted and plundered the town and set fire to the telegraph office.

They were pursued out of town by a Federal Militia Company under the command of Captain Bridgewater, who caught up with them about five miles out of Harrodsburg. A brisk running fight followed in which twelve of the guerillas were wounded and killed. "Chat" Renick, one of Quantrill's officers was badly wounded in this fight.

While in Kentucky, Quantrill operated with all three of the known bands of guerillas that infested Kentucky at that time—these three bands of so-called partisan soldiers comprised the gangs of "One-Arm" Berry, Sue Mundy and Billy Magruder.

Sue Mundy, whose real name was Marcellus Jerone Clarke, was a Kentuckian and was captured a short time later and hanged at Louisville, Kentucky. The execution took place at 18 and Magazine streets on March 15, 1865. A large crowd witnessed the hanging of the Kentucky guerilla chief. Mundy was the son of Brigadier-General Hector M. Clarke, and not, as some historians have asserted, the son of Governor Clark. After the execution his body was turned over to his relatives, and was taken by his aunt, Mrs. Mary Bradshaw, to Franklin, Kentucky where it was buried in the cemetery there beside the body of his mother.

It is believed that Quantrill and Sue Mundy first met shortly after the Harrodsburg raid, and to Mundy, Quantrill is said to have revealed his true identity. At any rate the two commands were consolidate and thereafter operated in a more-or-less close alliance, and fought together in that region. Jim Little, one of Quantrill's men, was the first of the original Missourians to fall in battle after reaching Kentucky.

Shortly after the Harrodsburg raid, on February 9, 1865, the guerillas, while in camp on the Little South Fork river a short distance west of Hustonville, were attacked by Federal militia; four were killed and their horses, thirty-five in number, were captured.

The outlaws were scattered and chased into the woods bare-footed and unmounted. About twenty days later they were all well mounted again and able to ride into Danville, Kentucky and raid that town.

After the Hickman and Danville raids they dropped out of sight for a while, and were not heard of again until April 13, 1865. On that date the Federal command of Major Wilson, with detachments under Captain Penn and Terrill made contact with them near Bloomfield, Spencer County, Kentucky. A sharp engagement followed in which Quantrill lost three men. One of Captain Terrill's men shot and killed Marion, second in command to Quantrill.

The guerilla chieftain was fast losing his hold on his men; discipline, never on a very high plane in Quantrill's command, was now almost completely absent. No longer would the men follow the commands of their chief, blindly; in fact it was getting to be pretty much of a case of every man for himself, and the Devil take the hindermost.

On one occasion, Quantrill and one of his men, Petyton Long quarelled about the rather brutal and cold-blooded murder of a Federal officer. Both drew their guns and were only prevented from shooting each other by the intervention of others of the band. At any rate, Long pulled out from Quantrill's gang and joined up with the gang of Sue Mundy; he was killed a short time later in a skirmish, with Federal troops.

WE NOW COME to Quantrill's last skirmish, his last stand—the fight at Wakerfield Farm, in which he received the wound from which he later died in a military hospital at Louisville.

It was on a cold rainy morning on May 10, 1865. Quantrill and twenty of his men were "holed-up" on the farm of James H. Wakerfield, at what was then known at Samuel's Depot, but has since been renamed Wakerfield, Spencer County, Kentucky. It is near the present little town of Bloomfield. The guerillas were lounging about, just taking things easy and resting up. Some of them, including Quantrill, were asleep in the hayloft, catching up on some badly-needed sleep. For several days, they had been pretty busy trying to escape the net that was rapidly closing around them and being drawn tighter day by day. The Federal troops had been close on their heels, now, for ten days; they had had but little time for devilment or to get rest.

Some of the more lively among the bandits were engaged in a sham battle, throwing corn-cobs at each other and laughing and joking. After all, most of the guerillas were mere boys in age; Quantrill was in his early twenties.

Suddenly, over a slight rise in the ground to the west of the stable where the bandits were congregated, appeared a body of mounted horsemen and they bore down upon the surprised guerillas.

Instantly all was in confusion. Those awake shouted a warning to their sleeping companions in the stable-loft above. Each man tried to see who could get away the quickest. The horses were tied to the fence that surrounded the stable, and to the uprights that supported the shed that extended out from two sides of the barn.

The bandits made a mad scramble for their horses and those that were fortunate enough to mount fled in a mad rout.

Quantrill was sound asleep in the hayloft when the alarm was given. He clambered out and made a wild rush for his horse, bent like the rest of the men on the idea of making his escape.

A few days before, he had lost the horse that had been with him all through his days of guerilla warfare. It was a one-man horse and the guerillas said that it had part of Quantrill's unconquerable spirit. No one but Quantrill could ride that horse; it would bite, kick and squeal at the other horses that got within range of it.

Once, when Quantrill was pursued by Federals, he had to abandon his horse because there was a very high rail fence to cross. Running through the woods, Quantrill heard a crash behind him; it was the animal horse following him. It had jumped the rail fence.

Quantrill believed that when his horse was killed he would be killed, also; he expected death any time, now.

AS QUANTRILL leaped from the hayloft and dashed to his horse it became frightened. It plunged and broke the man's hold on its reins, leaving the guerilla chief afoot. He yelled for assistance.

"Here, git up behind me!" shouted one of his men.

Quantrill ran alongside the mounted guerilla, attempted to climb up behind. It was while running alongside that he was shot.

The bullet entered his back, near his left shoulder, where it ranged downward and, striking the spine, paralyzed him below the arms. Quantrill released his hold on the saddle of his companion and fell to the ground. As he fell he was shot again, the bullet taking off the end of the index finger on his left hand.

As they passed the wounded guerilla chief, some of the Federals paused long enough to strip him of his arms and also a pair of fancy boots before

resuming their chase of the other fleeing bandits.

Finally, however, some of Captain Terrill's men returned from the chase and Quantrill was lifted onto a blanket, carried into the house, and medical aid was summoned. A Doctor McClaskey, who lived nearby, soon arrived and after an examination informed Quantrill of what he already knew; his wound was a mortal one.

Quantrill, realizing that his end was near, did not ask for a minister. However, a Catholic priest was with the wounded guerilla; he was absolved and taken into the Catholic church.

The next day, May 11, 1865, Captain Terrill arrived at the Wakerfield Farm with a farm wagon filled with straw over which a blanket had been spread. On this the wounded guerilla was placed and the journey to Louisville began.

Upon arrival there the wounded guerilla was taken to the military headquarters of General Palmer and delivered to the Provost-Marshal, from where he was taken to a military hospital and placed under guard.

Quantrill lingered from May 11, 1865, until June 6, 1865, when he died. His body was taken in charge by Catholic Sisters and buried in St. John's Cemetery, then known as Portland Cemetery, but since called St. Cecelia's. This cemetery is located at 26th and Duncan Streets in Louisville. There the body of Quantrill remained until December 8, 1882, when it was disinterred and taken to Canal Dover, Ohio, Quantrill's birthplace, for reburial.

Quantrill's men, or what remained of them, surrendered at Samuel's Depot, Kentucky, on July 26, 1865. Among those who surrendered were Allen Parmer and Frank James—who was destined to flash later with his brother, Jesse, as two of the world's most famous border bandits. Allen Parmer also rode with the James Boys. He later married their sister.

Thus ended the career of one of the bloodiest and most fanatical guerilla-soldiers of this, or any other country... William Clark Quantrill.

★

He was a wanderer, completely self-sufficient and Bonnie suspected that she was not the first girl to suffer because of inability to master and hold Duke Monsell...

Here is a powerful feature novel of the Old West by ROE RICHMOND

NO BRAND FOR DUKE

leads off the big April issue of

REAL WESTERN ROMANCES

A Nester Sides a Parson

"You say violence is wrong, Parson, but you and the others are ready to hide behind my willingness to fight. If what I'm doing is wrong, what about your profiting from it?"

By Lee Floren

THE COLD rain had soaked through his slicker and had dragged his horse down to a walk by the time Martin again reached Red Dog town. That afternoon he had filed on a homestead out on Pistol Creek and the ride back from the county seat had seemed long and miserable.

"Beat the hell outa him!"

Martin pulled in, surprise written on his wide face, for he thought at first the words had been thrown at him. Idly, as he had ridden into this town, he had noticed the tall man who had been walking against the rain, the

only person at that time on the plank sidewalk.

Now two others had jumped the tall man, and they were fighting; Martin figured they had been in hiding behind a building when he had first noticed the tall one. He sat saddle, watched and thought, *Two against one...that isn't justice...*

He sat his bronc, slicker soaked and clinging, and watched with the indifference of a man who had seen too much trouble. He knew none of these men. When he had ridden through the day before, he had stopped for a drink in the *Stirrup Saloon;* he had then gone on into the basin where he had staked out his homestead.

Martin wanted no part of this fight. The tall man, he decided, could take care of himself. He had backed up against a building; the three were fighting hard. One thug went back, flailing in the rain, to sit down hard in the muddy road.

The tall man's fists had knocked him there. The other was slugging; the tall man hit him hard. So hard that Martin heard the clean crack of his knuckles.

"Come an' help me!" the man hollered.

Because of the rain, nobody had come out to watch the fight. Martin looked from window to window—a quick glance—and he saw two women watching from the Mercantile. One was about fifty, he figured, although he could not see her plainly; the other was younger and her eyes met Martin's. The glance was quick and fleeting, but Martin read terror in her eyes. She was, he decided, rather pretty. He jerked his glance back to the fight.

Now a third man came from between two buildings. He had a club and Martin saw it rise; he was off his bronc by then. He was a short man, this Martin, broad and heavy, although only twenty-four. The man with the club did not see him and the man circled slightly, trying to make his blow sure.

Martin grabbed the club. The man was just going to hit; and Martin's jerk almost upset him.

He whirled on Martin, breath sucking in with surprise. He was heavy and he had a wide, almost stupid face.

"Not that way," Martin said. "We don't fight that way in Montana!"

"Who t'hell are you?"

Martin said, "That makes no difference." He twisted the club—a hard, brutal gesture; they fought for the weapon. Then Martin had it and he threw it to one side, the club landing in the mud.

The man hit at him. Martin went under the fist, something inside saying, *Well, here's trouble again...and you aimed to settle down and farm in peace.* Then he went to work.

He was pretty to watch, even though he wore a slicker, even though his boots were on sloppy, slippery ground.

MARTIN used the fighting-skill he had learned in the police gym while a cop back in St. Louis. He used the knowledge he had learned out on his beat, there in the tough section along the waterfront. His first punch, hard and true, broke across the man's guard. The man went down in the mud.

Martin grinned, then whirled; one man was on his feet, and he had picked up the club. A glance told him the tall man and the remaining thug were in a clinch. The tall one was bodily lifting his attacker off his feet. Then the tall man's foot slipped, throwing him in line of the descending club.

Martin wasn't close enough to grab the man's arm, but he lunged ahead, grabbed him by the back of his buckskin vest. The buckskin was strong, and Martin was strong, too. He yanked hard. The club came down, missed. The force of the blow, falling against the rain, pulled the man forward.

His jaw was open. Martin hit once,

twice—he came in, fighting. His right smashed against the man's jawbone. The man had enough. He staggered, the club forgotten; he turned and ran. He gained the sidewalk, ran across the wet planks, then darted in between two buildings.

That left only one thug, Martin realized, for the first man he had knocked down had also pulled out. The tall man, he saw, was flat on his back, the other on top of him. Even as Martin watched, the tall man doubled his legs, got his boots into his assailant's belly.

The tall man kicked, face savage. The man went back and, as he passed Martin, Martin hit him. The blow, coming from the side, turned him and dumped him on the sidewalk.

"I—I got enough!"

He started crawling then, heading for the opening between the Mercantile and the *Stirrup*. He went on his knees for a few feet, then got up and went between the buildings, the rain hiding him.

Martin stood, legs wide, and gulped in wind. He didn't know what this had been all about, but he saw he was involved in it. By now, the two women had left the Mercantile, and they stood in the doorway, the overhead protecting them from the rain. Martin glanced at them again, and this time he saw the young woman clearly.

She was dark, he saw, about five-foot-four, and he judged her around twenty. But he had no eyes for her, for a man had come out of the *Stirrup*, a tough, heavy-set man. He moved forward a pace and the lamplight, coming through the big window, showed his face.

A thick face, arrogant with power. A face with deep-set eyes, almost overshadowed by the thick brows. His lips were loose and thick, and he stood there and was silent, yet Martin seemed to feel the imprint of his eyes.

Martin thought, *Tom Burke, and maybe he's tied up in this.* He had met Burke the day before, when he had been riding out to locate his claim on Pistol Creek, and he knew Burke owned the *Stirrup*.

A man had said, "Tom Burke don't want nesters in this country. He owns the big Slash 6, an' Pistol Crick is on his range. Don't tell him you aim to settle out there, stranger."

Martin pointed out that he was settling on government land now opened for homesteading. "The Homestead Act says that land is anybody's who squats on it," he reminded.

"Burke's run this town for a long time, fella. He don't pay no attention to laws made by the big-boys in Washington; long ways from here to Washington."

"Then I'll have to buck him, sooner or later?"

The townsman nodded. "Fellow in town named Jim Kelso. Reverend Kelso, to be exact. He's movin' in nesters. Says he aims to make this a peaceful community. He's got ten farmers here in town but so far they all been afraid to stake claims. You'll be the first one to run a fence-line."

Martin nodded. He had bought a tent, ridden out on Pistol Creek, and established his boundaries. Later on, according to the county officials down in the county-seat, the county-surveyor would come out and true up his lines. They had mentioned Tom Burke down there, too.

"What's wrong with your sheriff?" Martin wanted to know. "As a citizen, I demand police protection."

"Our sheriff ain't much—" The other caught himself in time. "Sheriff done delivered a cow-thief over to Deer Lodge an' the pen. Left this mornin' on the train."

Martin walked out, his smile cynical. Deer Lodge was almost seven hundred miles away and he knew lawmen—the sheriff would be over there for a week, anyway.

No law on this range, except what a man made.

NOW TOM BURKE stood there, sheltered by the overhang of the building, lamplight across his coarse face as he watched, silent yet. The tall man, hand extended, spoke to Martin. "I'm Reverend James Kelso, sir. I wish to thank you, Mr.—"

"Martin."

"I'm very grateful, sir."

Martin was silent.

"I—" Reverend Kelso saw Burke for the first time. "I'll talk to you later, Martin. You'll come with me?"

Martin understood; the minister did not want to talk to him with Burke listening. A wryness entered Martin. He looked at this rawboned man of the gospel, this man dressed in funeral black, this man covered with mud. He saw a gaunt, lonesome face, yet a face with stern lines.

The two women left the Mercantile porch, and they went down the street, umbrellas open. The minister hooked his hand under Martin's elbow and they started down the street, with Martin leading his tired buckskin.

"Just a minute, you two!"

That was Tom Burke's voice, harsh with impatience. Martin turned and Kelso stopped, too.

Martin asked, "Are you talking to me?"

Burke came forward, polished boots in the mud. He said, "I am, fellow. You stopped in here yesterday and later I learned you bought a tent at the Merc, and you established a claim out on Pistol Crick. You went into the county-seat this afternoon an' filed first papers."

"Your spies miss nothing," Martin said.

Burke had no answer to that. "An' your name is Martin. Henry Martin?"

"Hank, to my friends." Martin was cynical.

Rev. Kelso said, "Come on," and pulled on Martin's arm. Martin pushed the hand away, not taking his eyes from Burke. He got the impression that Reverend Kelso wanted no more trouble. Not that he blamed the sky-pilot a bit.

"I'm not your friend." Burke spoke almost quietly. "I run cattle on Pistol Crick, an' I want that range open."

"So I heard."

Burke said, "I don't want you out there, savvy. The best thing you can do, Martin, is jerk stakes outa this country."

"That's your opinion."

Martin saw the hardness solidify, drawing in the loose lips. They matched gazes, and Martin read the danger in this man. Then Reverend Kelso pulled hard at his elbow again.

THIS TIME, Martin went with him. He looked back once and Tom Burke still stood there, and he knew Burke's eyes were still hard. "Burke's men jumped me," Kelso finally said.

Martin said, "I figured it as such." He told about his talk the day before with the garrulous townsman. "Your nesters, they're afraid to settle on Burke range?" The question was cynical.

"Not afraid, just—well. We'll settle there!"

Martin said, "Sure, they'll settle. Soon, too. They'll settle after I blast my way through Burke; they'll be brave, then, mister—real brave."

Kelso said, "You don't understand."

"I think I do." Martin stopped. "I settled first; it pushes me against Tom Burke. I trim Burke's horns, then your nesters can move in. But what if Burke trims mine?"

"Right is with us."

"Being right doesn't keep a bullet from killing a man." Martin felt anger. "Good night."

He left the minister standing there, and he went toward the livery-barn. No use riding in this rain out to a wet, soggy tent where he'd sleep on the ground. He'd bed down in the hotel after racking his bronc at the barn.

His sense of fair play had led him

into trouble. He should have left the minister fighting the two men—Burke's men. He should have let the man club the minister down; by helping Kelso, he had gotten in worse with Burke.

That latter assumption, he decided, was not practical. He had squatted on Burke graze, and therefore drawn Tom Burke's deepest antipathy. Well, let Kelso and his sodmen fight their own battles! He had enough troubles of his own. And he knew he was facing danger. Burke would try to make an example of him, in order to scare Kelso and his nesters. He had ridden into trouble that might end in gunsmoke.

Face stern, he walked toward the livery-barn, leading his buckskin. He—ex-cop, rambler, drifter—had sided a parson in a tight; that was irony in itself. But it was small in the shadow of Tom Burke and his guns.

There was a lantern in the barn, but it hung at the far end, giving the interior a gloomy, shifting appearance. He came through the wide door. Just inside the barn, something smashed across his head.

Blackness roared in.

●

FIRST HE saw the girl, and realized she was the woman he had seen in the Mercantile when he had talked to the Reverend Kelso and Tom Burke. His vision steadied, and beyond the girl he saw Kelso and another woman—this was the older woman who had been with this girl in the store. Other faces came in, too—four of them—the faces of men, though.

He sat up. "Where am I?"

The girl had a soft, rich voice. "You're in Brannigan's Hotel, Mr. Martin. I'm Sue Brannigan, and this lady is my mother."

Reverend Kelso asked, "How do you feel?"

Memory returned to Martin. His head ached and nausea clawed at his belly. Gradually his head steadied. "They slugged me when I went into the barn. But how did I get here?"

Sue Brannigan said, "Reverend Kelso followed you, and he saw the man running away, after he had knocked you down." She looked at the minister, and Martin liked the clean, smooth sweep of her jaw. Her perfume was pleasing.

Martin sat up, then put his head between his hands. He was in the parlor of the hotel, a frame-building.

Reverend Kelso was speaking. "I followed you, sir, to apologize for my abruptness, and to thank you again for helping a man of the gospel when he was fallen upon by murderers. Had I not followed you, perhaps the Burke man woud have killed you."

Martin looked up. "What's the name of the gent that slugged me?"

Kelso and Sue Brannigan exchanged glances. Mrs. Brannigan shook her head. Martin looked at the four men standing close to the door; they were of the same mold, and he judged them as farmers. Their hands and their clothes told him this, and he remembered that Reverend Kelso had ten farmers, ready to move in on Burke graze. And yet afraid to make the move.

"What's his name?" Martin repeated.

Sue Brannigan shrugged, a pretty gesture that fitted her quietness. Reverend Kelso said, clearing his throat, "I'm not sure, Mr. Martin. The night and the rain, you know."

"Who do you *think* he was?"

Kelso said, "Matt Hooper."

Martin rolled the name in his mind, put it into a niche. He got to his feet, his knees steady now. His head had almost cleared and only the bump there was miserable, but the blow had not broken the skin.

"I want to thank you, Reverend Kelso. And you too." His eyes took in Sue Brannigan and her mother.

"You'll stay here tonight?" Mrs.

Brannigan asked. "We have room, sir. We wish you would."

Martin found himself looking at Sue Brannigan. He liked the way her hair curled at the base of her neck. Then his slow gaze ran over the four farmers. They met his eyes, and two looked away.

Martin spoke to Kelso. "Your farmers?"

"Four of them."

Martin said, almost drily, "I can count." He was suddenly unhappy, suddenly at ends with himself. The farmers were causing it: in their strength they had power, but they did not use this power. "I'll fight my way in, and I'll make my play and my claim. If I had any sense, I'd run out of here."

Sue Brannigan watched him. Reverend Kelso turned his broad-brimmed black hat. Mrs. Brannigan looked at the floor. Only the farmers stood without emotion—four men who watched.

"But maybe I haven't got any sense..." Martin showed that quiet smile. "I'm not going to run; I've been here just a short while but I see now it means guns with Tom Burke."

"He has a good gunman in Hooper," the minister pointed out.

Martin said, "You've got ten men and each can handle a gun, even though he may not be a gunslinger." He looked at the four farmers with a direct flatness.

One man said, "We've got families, sir."

"Does that make you cowards?"

The man flushed, and he looked away; another looked at the floor. The other two also had places for their eyes beside Martin.

Reverend Kelso said, "Force does not bring righteousness, Mr. Martin."

Martin put on his hat, slipped into his slicker. "It does in this country. My bed is wet, out there in that tent. By this time, water's got under the tent, and wet the bed, but a wet bed alone is better than a warm bed with cowards."

He walked out, crossed the porch, and stepped into the rain.

BEHIND him the door opened. "Mr. Martin, a minute—"

Reverend Kelso's voice. Martin went on, and Kelso did not follow. To hell with them and their righteousness. Burke represented force, and he only knew force, and Burke had put Matt Hooper against him. Only force would bring about righteousness. Those farmers knew that; they were not that ignorant.

He was caught in the middle. He would not run; because of that, he would have to move against Burke. This fight had become personal, and Matt Hooper was tied into it now. And, in such action, he would help the farmers.

There was irony in that thought. Now they sat on one side and watched him, and they would let him move against Burke and Hooper, and they would benefit. The minister had tied his horse in front of the Mercantile, and Martin found his stirrup and rose.

He would picket out his bronc when he reached his tent. Grass grew high in the draw. He rode out of Red Dog without challenge, even though lamps still burned in the *Stirrup*.

For some reason, Martin kept remembering the way the hair had curled at the base of Sue Brannigan's pretty neck. He smiled.

•

He did not ride directly to his tent. Dawn found Martin on a butte, using his field-glasses; twenty minutes later, he came behind the man who squatted in the brush, rifle across his knees.

"Get up," Martin said; "drop that rifle. Stand up slow, and turn around."

The man seemed to freeze. He seemed, suddenly to be made of granite, and Martin watched him closely. One sweep of that rifle, turning fast—

But then the man stood up, rifle slipping to the mud. He turned, but he did not raise his hands. Surprise was scrawled across a face dark with whiskers, across eyes faded and without character. "You're—you're Martin?"

"I am."

"How did you know I was here?"

Martin said, "It's an old game, mister. A man stakes out a claim on land nobody wants him on an' then a man jumps his claim. The first fellow loses his rights because he doesn't fulfill his obligations on the land. The second guy gets the claim for his boss."

"But I was hidin' in the brush!"

Martin smiled, and said, "I've been around. Now talk, fellow, an' go to your horse, 'cause we're headin' back into town."

"Burke'll kill me," the man said.

"If he don't, I probably will."

THEY LEFT the man's rifle there in the mud and walked ahead, coming to the clearing wherein stood Martin's tent, soggy and sagging from the rain. And as they walked, Martin tried to gauge the danger in this Burke man. The dark face was a face of a killer, and the man still packed his six-shooter.

Martin said, "Stand still."

The man stopped, back to him. Martin said, "Spread your legs wide, and stand still." The man looked back, puzzled. He stood spraddle-legged and Martin hooked a boot around his ankle from behind. This way he could kick suddenly and the man would be tripped. His hand came in, found the pistol, threw it to one side, and the hand went over the man, found no more weapons.

The man said, "You know the tricks, fella."

"I'm an ex-cop," Martin said.

"I ain't got no gun."

"No, not now."

Martin made the man go for his bronc, tied in the brush. Before the man mounted Martin looked the saddle over and saw no rifle on it. He moved back and said, "Climb up, fella."

The man found his stirrup, swung up and lay low on his saddle. Martin had his rifle on him. The man lay low on the saddle, then he rolled, coming to the ground on the opposite side of his horse. And as he fell, he shot.

Martin did not hear the bullet, for the roar was loud. He glimpsed the man sliding over, and his rifle came up in one sweeping, quick movment. He got in one shot, and then the man hit the ground. The horse ran through the brush, crashing through.

The man lay there, face down. His pistol had fallen, and Martin kicked it. The man got a hand under him, rolled laboriously on his side; Martin saw the blood on his chest.

"Had a .45...hid...in my saddlebag."

Martin squatted. "I should have searched those bags. You acted fast, fella, and I didn't think you would, because Tom Burke's wages weren't worth being shot over."

"Maybe it wasn't the wages. You came up behind me, jumped me—well, a man's got a rep, and he has to keep it up."

"Some men think that way," Martin admitted.

The man looked at him, then his face twisted with pain, and he doubled over. Strength left his arm and he slid into the mud. Martin turned him over a little, and he put his hand against the man's chest.

He kept his hand there, and his face wasn't pretty to look at. When he withdrew his hand, his face was still tough. He stood up.

He had killed a Burke man. Each step, each movement, pulled Burke closer to him, brought them closer to destruction.

Martin thought, "Irony...and trouble."

●

He caught the dead man's horse, for the animal had tangled his forefeet in his reins, and Martin led the animal back. He got the dead man over the saddle, jack-knifing him across leather despite the horse's protests, and he tied him hand and feet, so he could not slide off the saddle.

Then, leading the horse, he headed back toward Red Dog.

He raised his hand to his lips, and he found that his hand trembled. Then he compensated in his mind, saying he had killed in self-defense. There was some comfort in that thought, and he drew strength from it. Within a mile, the tremble had left him, and his thoughts had solidified.

THREE MILES from Red Dog, he met a rider who turned out to be Reverend Kelso. If the sight of the dead gunman affected the man of the gospel, his face did not show it. Then Martin realized this man had seen much of death and accounted the lack of facial change to this point.

"That's Milt Donner," the minister said.

Martin told him about the episode out on his claim.

"Now what do you intend to do?"

"You can't leave a dead man lay there in the rain," Martin said.

"But when Burke hears this, when he sees Donner's body—"

Silence, only broken by the slush of hoofs in mud. The rain had stopped, and the sun was making a brave effort to shine through the clouds.

Martin looked at the gaunt, funeral man. "There never was any other way, Kelso; the minute I ran my fence lines I was marked in Burke's book. You were coming out to talk to me?"

The farmers had held a meeting that morning. They had agreed that, if Hank Martin had guts enough to settle on Burke graze, they would settle out there, too.

"And how does that strike you?" Martin asked.

The Reverend Kelso shook his gaunt head. "I am a man of the gospel. Might is not right, and the law is just. I appealed for them to wait until the sheriff came back and to get his aid and to settle peacefully, under the protective wing of the law."

Martin hid his smile. "A fellow down in the county seat told me that Burke's money did much to elect this sheriff," he reminded.

"I've heard that, too."

"Then isn't your idea weak, Reverend?"

"Possibly, sir; but it is the only way out."

Martin said no more. The man's mind was made up; this decision had come out of his study and environment. He wondered if he would find any help in the ten farmers. They were eastern men from across the Mississippi and the only guns they had ever handled were rifles and these were used in hunting game, and not in hunting men.

They came to the edge of town, and Reverend Kelso said, "I leave you here, sir. I guess I do not need to warn you, but when you ride into town with that horse and dead man behind you, Tom Burke and his gunmen will move against you."

"I guessed that," Martin conceded.

The minister rode off, black horse at a trot. Martin came in, riding past the few scattered dwellings, and a man came out of a tent. He was a rolling, short man in bib overalls, plainly a farmer. "That's Milt Donner there," he said.

"So Kelso told me."

The man looked up, eyes keen. "You killed him?"

"On my homestead. He aimed to squat."

The man nodded. He said, "I see," and he walked back into his tent. When Martin rode on, he heard the man talking with a woman inside the tent; her voice was shrill and strong, and evidently raised in protest.

The end of the street came, with the *Stirrup Saloon* in the middle of the block, and here Martin got from saddle. The sun was bright now, sucking moisture out of the mud and ruts. Martin saw the man standing in front of the *Stirrup*. This man was not Tom Burke, but he was strangely familiar. Martin ran across his memory and decided he had been one of the assailants who had jumped Reverend Kelso last night.

Martin untied Donner's bronc, tied up the animal's reins, and the horse went down the street at a trot, to stop in front of the hitchrack of the *Stirrup*. Old habit had taken him there, Martin judged.

A man ran out, lifted Donner by the hair, and Martin heard him holler, "It's Donner, an' he's dead. Shot through the chest!"

He ran back into the saloon. Martin heard glass crash, and he saw the rifle-barrel jut through the saloon's front window. He ran then, rifle up, and mud geysered behind him. He landed on the plank sidewalk, lay behind steps leading into a business establishment, and his rifle talked.

Glass fell, but the distance was far, and he wondered if he had connected. A horse reared back at a rack, fighting his hackamore rope. Donner's bronc loped by, the dead man jerking to each jump. Martin heard other rifles, and he realized the shooting did not all come from the *Stirrup*.

IT CAME from stores, from buildings. He saw a puff of smoke from the top of the blacksmith shop. A man up there was shooting at the *Stirrup Saloon*. Martin jacked in a fresh cartridge, and smiled in grim release.

The farmers were helping him; they had gone against Kelso, and they were siding him. Now he had a chance. This thought was bright and good, yet in its brightness was a dullness. The minister was right; this was the wrong way—the way of death. But the only way Tom Burke understood.

A bullet ripped a plank in front of him, and he knew he would have to leave his hiding-place. He ran into the building, found out he was in a store. The proprietor was hollering something, for his big front window had been broken, but Martin ran through, cramming fresh cartridges into his .30-30. He came out the back, and he waited there, hiding behind a barrel of trash in the alley.

He figured that Burke and his men could not hold the *Stirrup* long. Concentrated lead from the farmers would drive them out. Either that, or a farmer would set fire—Martin saw a hand lift from a neighboring roof, the man's body hidden behind the coping.

That hand had a bundle of greasy waste, and this was on fire. The flames cut across the sunshine and landed on the roof of the *Stirrup Saloon,* about forty feet away. Evidently the waste had a rock in its center to make it easy to throw, for Martin heard it clang as it landed on the saloon's roof.

Would the joint burn? With this rain— Martin realized that the sun and wind had been dry this morning and he hoped they had sucked the moisture out of the roof and the roofing would burn.

He waited, watching the *Stirrup's* back-door, and then he saw smoke come up—eddying first, twisting, rising. The saloon was on fire. He looked at the adjoining buildings, judged them as safe, for there was no wind.

He waited, and finally Tom Burke came out. Martin stepped out then and Burke saw him.

Burke said, almost quietly, "You're the gent behind it all, Martin. An' by all that's—"

Burke's gun rose, and Martin's rifle came up. Martin felt the raw smash of a bullet and thought, oddly,

That makes three times I've been shot; two of those were down along the Mississippi, and this one came in Montana. His rifle spoke, and the lever came down three times.

Burke dropped his gun. He sat down, leaned forward, and rolled to one side, and lay still. Another man rushed out of the building, and Martin knocked him down. He spun and lost his gun and rolled over and hollered, "Don't kill me!"

The man lay there, gasping, trying to say something. Martin heard shooting on the main-street, heard men holler. A horse went by, two men on him, and Martin let them go, for by this time he was sitting, numb and silent, beside a building. And he had dropped his rifle.

He was still sitting there when Sue Brannigan and the Reverend James Kelso found him. By this time the *Stirrup Saloon* was burned down and by this time guns had stopped talking.

Reverend Kelso had blood on his jaw. "We wiped them out." He was harsh. "You were right, Martin. Right makes might, and after fighting comes peace; I want to beg your pardon."

Martin felt of the man's earnestness...and found it good. Sue and the minister got him to his feet.

Sue asked, "Is your leg...broken, Martin?"

"I doubt it. I can put weight on it."

"Then it isn't broken."

They went through the farmers who had gathered to watch; Martin counted them and found them all there.

A sodman said, "They all ran out right after you killed Burke, Martin."

Martin nodded. He looked at Sue Brannigan. "I'd like to see a lot of you, Miss Brannigan."

"You will, Martin."

And then Sue Brannigan caught herself and blushed.

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FOR FIFTEEN years, now, they'd been making a sort of ritual of it, these Hammersley twins, riding into Mossyhorn Bend of a Saturday night and whooping it up at bar and poker table and roped-off dance area in the *Red Ace* saloon, sometimes cashing in a fair-sized stack of blue chips but usually shooting their wad. Like most twins, they set a heap of store by each other, though Cob Hammersley—the one without teeth—wrangled the cavvy on the Triangle M. and Rudy Hammersley—with his mouthful of store-bought choppers—cooked for the Leaning K.

Rudy Hammersley was winner, tonight. He raked it his chips and grinned widely; his artificial teeth flashed like gems. "First time I've took the house in a coon's age, boys," he recalled. "Reckon I'll call it a night. You comin' with me, Cob?"

Cob nodded wordlessly. His lips drew back against soft gums that must shun the taste of a juicy beefsteak. Never could stand a set of those unnatural teeth, Cob couldn't, having lost his patience with them after throwing away several that wouldn't fit. But that wasn't what bothered him now.

Rudy was packing away with him a

It was the first time the Hammersley twins had made a real killing at the Red Ace, and it looked suspicious . . .

heap of money tonight; he was ahead by nearly five hundred dollars. Mossyhorn Bend was still a tough town, Cob reminded himself, and somebody just might have it in his head to waylay his brother.

As they got up from their chairs, Cob's eyes nervously raked the big sweltering room, plentifully crowded with customers even at this late hour. He took in Oklahoma Mike O'Shea, the bartender, who always looked like he might slit your throat for two bits. There was a faro dealer named Joe Beecher, and a house-gambler simply called Rivers, both smelling of tinhorn. There were Mamie, Sal and Lou, scant-skirted attractions of the *Red Ace*, whom Cob would have hated to accuse of sinister designs. Among the patrons, there was always a handful of hardcases—men who had killed before to get their hands on someone else's money and who would kill again. Rudy had cashed in his chips, now, and they were taking leave. Rudy, Cob saw, was tight-lipped.

Huey Thrasher, puffy-faced, round-bellied new owner of the *Red Ace*, still couldn't get over it. Amazed, he strained to his feet. "Never seen the beat," he shook his head, gaping and ungaping big mouth. "Played poker for thirty years, and never been swamped like that. But you come around next Saturday night, Cob, and I promise to trim the socks offa you."

"Rudy," Cob corrected. "You been ramroddin' the *Red Ace* two months, now, and still get us mixed."

Thrasher batted his eyes, surprised. "Blast my buttons," he said. "Rudy really had his lip sewed down just now—and for a second you were 'like as two peas in a pod. Damnit, you two, it's a good thing only one of you got enough gumption up to wear some store-bought fangs. You even annoy everybody by wearin' the same kinda duds." He laughed, a queer wheeze of a sound, as he dragged out a black stogie, shakily.

Cob eyed the saloon man. He didn't know too much about flabby Huey Thrasher, a slick stranger who had won the *Red Ace* from Jim Redden in a poker pot two months ago. Maybe he'd won it honest; maybe he hadn't. All Cob knew was that this was the first Saturday, since the saloon changed hands, that either Rudy or he had ended up with winnings. That might be a natural run of luck, or it might be Thrasher's way of dangling bait before the Hammersley twins, to lure them back for more fruitless Saturdays. It was the second time in fifteen years, Cob recalled, that any sizable pot went out of this barroom. The first time had been, of course, when three jacks took kings and queens...and the *Red Ace*.

JIM REDDEN, tall, saturnine, forty-ish, slammed down his glass at the end of the bar. Jim formerly owned the *Red Ace;* now he was its swamper for meals, a bed, and occasional whiskey money. Some other time, Cob might even buy him a cheering slug of Old Crow. "Ought to wait in town and band that cash in the morning, Rudy," Jim said, easily. "Sure ought to."

"Nope," Rudy spat at a spittoon. "Thanks for the advice, Jim, but I got to wrangle up breakfast for them rannies in the morning. See you next Saturday, boys. I'll give you your chance to get back at me, Thrasher."

They went out of the place, then, mounting their ponies at the rack and quitting the midnight-darkened town. Cob kept a wary eye against their backtrail, and a hand in gun readiness, as they climbed into the foothills of the Scalplocks. Maybe they were not followed—yet. When they reached the crossroads, about an hour later, they slowed their saddlers, and Cob snapped, "Well, I got to get on to Triangle M. But I don't like this, leaving you."

Rudy pulled up hard, gritting teeth. "I'll take care of myself, remember that, Cob. Haven't I always been faster with a gun than you? Besides,

there won't be no trouble. I'll have the boss put the money in his safe, until I can ride to town again."

They parted without more word; Rudy going by way of Varmints Canyon to the Leaning K, and Cob following Blue Horse Creek to the Triangle M. He shivered in his saddle, not because it was chill, but because the world was all eerie dark, and he had a sudden feeling of blank helplessness in it. He should have stayed with Rudy. Still, he reminded himself, Rudy was the gun-quick one. He could take care of himself, in a tight, much better than Cob could pitch in and help with his slightly slower .45. Cob tried to breathe easier.

The gun's roar shattered the stillness! Cob spun his pony, and he whipped out his own Colt. He slammed back through the tight, mountain blackness, telling himself it hadn't happened.

But it had, there in Varmint Canyon. Cob, tumbling out of saddle, clasped Rudy in his arms. It was useless, crying at Rudy to speak. Rudy was dead. Murdered...

Rudy had a hole in his back, where the blood was oozing out. Cob was grief-wracked, as only a twin can be. He squeezed Rudy, like a boy would squeeze his dying dog, and he swayed there, memories deluging him. For forty-three years they'd ridden and frolicked together, separated only long enough to do their jobs. Cob Hammersley was a long while collecting himself, now. He finally rose, in a ravaging disbelief of what had happened, and his hand was wrapped around his gun. Vengeance—it was clawing aside his grief...

Somewhere in the moonless dark, he found Rudy's horse, and a quick search of saddlebags showed that the poker money was missing. That was all the killer desired, evidently. A thorough check revealed that Rudy's big watch hadn't been taken, nor any of his personal effects. There remained the skitterish task, now, of loading the pony with Rudy's lifeless body.

Of a sudden, Cob roused. Rudy's ride home would have to wait, he told himself impulsively. Nobody, not even Sheriff Nebb Stallings, was going to clutter up this business, either, and put the murderer on his guard, before Cob made his move. He nodded with conviction.

●

MOSSYHORN BEND was still riding high when he returned. It did that on Saturday nights, well into the Sunday morning church chimes. Cob racked his pony in front of the *Red Ace,* tried his gun in holster, stepped inside. The *Red Ace,* he believed, was his best bet; somebody in the saloon crowd must have sneaked out of the place, ridden after Rudy and killed him, and sneaked back somehow.

He stood wide-stanced inside the batwings, lips parting, and his gun hand ready. Surprise jerked across the faces of every man and woman present, he saw, and hush swooped down. They were all there—Huey Thrasher gaping and ungaping his heavy mouth; Mamie, Sal and Lou in a huddle and too scared to scream; Oklahoma Mike O'Shea nearly dropping a bottle; Joe Beecher looking like he wanted to run; Rivers sweating, a scatteration of hardcases blinking... Everyone gone kind of thunderstruck, before his sprouting gun, but not one of these guilty. Because a tall, saturnine, fortyish man was leaping back and springing out his Colt! A wild, crazy figure of a man...

"Rudy—Hammersley!" Jim Redden screamed it, finger tightening on trigger. "I got close enough to your back, I—I *couldn't* miss, damn you! You got to be dead! You—"

Redden never finished, because

Cob's gun was hammering out lead. Slightly slower than Rudy might have done it, maybe, he mused humorlessly, but edging the *Red Ace's* former owner by just a trifle. Redden sank to the floor.

"Wanted—wanted a poker stake," the man croaked out his last, a few minutes later. "Wanted a chance to get my *Red Ace* back, damn it! Snuck outside—when nobody was lookin'. Got the job done, and snuck back in—findin' nobody'd missed me, everybody havin' such a good time. But Rudy—Rudy—how—"

That was what everyone else wanted to know, including Sheriff Stallings who had just barged in, struggling with galluses with one hand and gripping his gun with the other.

"The name isn't Rudy," came Cob's grim answer, thankful that Redden could still hear. "I'm Cob Hammersley playing the part, with my brother's teeth. But it's sure hell it took his killing for me to find it out."

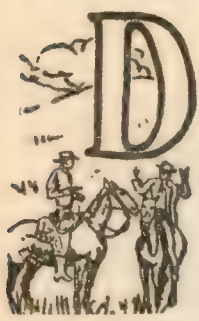
Stallings raised his grizzled brows. "Find out what, Cob?"

"I should have known," Cob said, regretfullly, with due respect for his brother. "Rudy and me has always bought the same sizes in everything, and it didn't matter which wore which. Then I had all this trouble in gettin' a fittin' in teeth. Well, Rudy'll like it, wherever it is, that I can eat beefsteak now. These handsome choppers fit perfect!"

★

DAYTIME NIGHTSHIRTS

by John T. Lynch



DURING the summers of 1870 and '71 the Dakota Sioux Indians were modishly attired in nightshirts—a gift from the Great White Father, even though he knew nothing about it.

The brother-in-law of an official in the Indian Department, in Washington, D.C., was a manufacturer of nightshirts. The official, always happy to do a relative a profitable favor, decided the Sioux should sleep decently clad.

When the Dakota Sioux received the huge shipment of nightshirts, they figured the Great White Father did not want them to go naked in the warm weather, as they had always done. Wishing to obey, every buck, squaw, brave, maiden and papoose donned a nightshirt. They didn't remove them until bedtime, and put them on the first thing in the morning.

The Indians' only complaint was that the gowns were too plain; no color or decoration. They soon found that the trade-marks and lettering on the sacks, in which the government sent them that horrible white man's flour, could be cut out to make fine designs when attached to the night-shirt.

The big red circle, imprinted on one of the brands of flour, was especially in demand. A medicine-man decided that the red circle brought good luck, as well as being pretty when sewed on the belly region of the nightshirt.

The whole thing was a source of great hilarity to trappers, traders and prospectors; it never ceased to strike them funny to see a Sioux, clad in the long slumber garment, on which was the wording: *"Acme Flour," "Finest In The World;" "Wonder Wheat—For Wonder Bread."*

The greatest glee was caused by a fat and waddling minor chief who would waddle proudly down the street of a town. His outsized white nightshirt was devoid of the usual decoration, except in one place. Fastened to the garment across the region of his wide bottom was the legend: *"Pride Of The Rockies."*

★

Buckshot Roberts' Bloodiest Battle

True Fact Feature by the Sundowner

UNLIKE most famous characters in the Old West, Buckshot Roberts never became a notorious man-killer until his old age. And, except for one incident, Roberts was thought to be a kindly, peace-loving old man who minded his business and wanted to be left alone. But, starting with that day at Blazer's sawmill, when Buckshot took on twelve men single-handed, his reputation began to spread like wildfire. This fight brought to light the fact that Buckshot was the toughest and most fearless man ever to hit Lincoln County, New Mexico.

Roberts, a disabled Rebel soldier of the Civil War, didn't believe in pistols, but everywhere he went he carried a sawed-off double-barrelled shotgun in the crook of his left arm. Buckshot was so crippled up from the

Battle of Vicksburg that he couldn't shoulder a gun, so he learned to shoot from the hip and became an expert. Nobody knew how expert a shot Buckshot was, because nobody ever challenged him, just to find out. The old man minded his own affairs and never took sides with anybody.

When the Lincoln County war broke out in the late 1870's, Buckshot made it plain that he wasn't throwing in with either side, asking that he be left to go his own way. But this was too much to ask in a place like Lincoln County...and with a red hot war going on.

Billy-The-Kid, leader of the McSween faction, decided that Buckshot should either get on one side or the other, and he sent out word to this effect. Buckshot ignored The Kid's ultimatum, going about his business as though nothing had happened. The idea of being completely ignored by an insignificant character like Buckshot Roberts made The Kid hopping mad. So he sent out further word that Roberts had better get on one side or the other before sundown or he would personally kill him on sight.

"Tell the young pup that I said come ahead," Buckshot told Ute Simmons, who had brought the message. "I've sent better men than him to his grave many a time...tell 'im that."

Old timers say that Buckshot Roberts was one of the few men Billy-The-Kid was ever afraid of. Whether this is true or not, nobody knows; but the fact that the Kid took eleven men with him when he went out to get Buckshot was proof enough to convince everybody Billy was afraid of the old man. The Kid rounded up Dick Brewer, Charlie Bowdre, Jack Middleton, Steve Stephens, Frank Coe, and six other professional gun-hands, and went looking for Old Man Roberts.

THEY FOUND Buckshot at Blazer's sawmill, about twenty-five miles southwest of Lincoln and bordering on the Mescalero-Apache Reservation. Buckshot had gone to the mill to visit with a sick friend who worked for Blazer and stayed at the mill.

The Kid and his gang came up on Roberts just as he was pulling up to the hitchrack. Buckshot calmly finished hitching his mule and turned to face the mob. "Throw down your gun, you yellow-livered snake," Frank Coe, the spokesman for the group, yelled.

"You've got enough men with you," Buckshot said quietly, "so why don't you come and get it."

The twelve gunmen went into a conference to decide what to do. Billy-The-Kid, always impatient and hot-tempered, led the gang toward where the old man stood. When they refused to take warning, Buckshot leveled down at them and cut loose, knocking three men down with his scatter-gun. But the others kept on coming, all guns blasting away point-blank.

The old man stood with his back to the wall of the house, facing a sheet of flame and returning their fire as fast as he could reload the shotgun. Roberts didn't give an inch, except when the impact of a .44 slug knocked him back. Now, with one man against nine, and the smoke so thick they couldn't see through it, they stood flat-footed and fanned lead at each other. Even though he was hit by six pistol balls, Buckshot kept standing his ground.

Jack Middleton was blasted in the face with a full load of buckshot. Charlie Bowdre was hit in the chest by a charge, but wasn't killed. Steve Stephens was gut-blasted and lay writhing in agony and kicking in the dust. Billy-The-Kid caught part of a blast in the rump, and was only saved from death then and there because Roberts' gun clicked on an empty shell when he had it aimed between The Kid's eyes. Every one of The Kid's men was speckled with buckshot and bleeding all over. And still the old soldier kept on shooting; in face of all this, the dumbfounded Billy-The-Kid

and his men gave ground and retreated back of the house.

Buckshot made his way inside of Blazer's sawmill where he found Blazer's Sharps rifle hanging on the wall. Here, the old fellow waited patiently.

Billy-The-Kid called to Blazer to make Roberts come out and surrender, but Blazer told The Kid to do his own fighting.

From inside the sawmill, the old soldier cried taunts at The Kid and his gang: "Come on in and get me, Kid," he yelled, "or could it be that you're all yellow-livered snakes like you called me a minute ago."

THE KID'S gang had fallen back to cover the mill from a safe distance, and from all sides. They opened up again when Roberts challenged them, shooting like wild men. But Roberts took it slow and easy, watching for his chance to pick off his enemies one at a time.

Dick Brewer lay behind a saw-log, one hundred and fifty yards away from the mill. Brewer made the mistake of raising his head twice in the same spot, and Buckshot, who had had his Sharps rifle aimed at that spot, triggered off when he saw movement. The ball pegged Brewer clean in the center of the forehead, nearly taking off his topknot. Frank Coe, the loud-mouthed spokesman, tried to move in closer, but Buckshot stopped him cold before he took six steps.

Cursing like a maniac when he saw this, The Kid rushed Roberts, throwing lead wildly from both pistols. A ball from Roberts' gun took off Billy's hat and cut a crease in his scalp; Billy fell back under cover. This was enough, even for Billy-The-Kid.

After a while, The Kid gathered what was left of his men together and they rode away, leaving their dead strewn all over the yard of Blazer's sawmill.

The story about The Kid and his eleven professional gunfighters getting whipped by one old man haunted him till the end of his days. But The Kid's efforts were not in vain; old Buckshot Roberts died the next day. Buckshot had been hit hard ten times by .44 slugs. . . an ailment which is almost impossible to recover from.

★

The Mail Pouch

This department is open to all readers, and authors, who would like to discuss Western lore and history—and cuss out the editor when he makes a boner, or praise us when you like something.

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

No doubt, there must be times when editing a group of popular Westerns becomes a chore. Publishing costs soar, or perhaps some crank has written a letter that takes the joy from the day. Well, take heart from the plight of the pioneer editor of the West. Most generally, he kept a handy gun around the premises; he kept it loaded in order to back with force his right to express an opinion.

Legend has it the *Tombstone Epitaph* paid salaries to three editors simultaneously—in case the first or second met with untimely accident. There always hung the daily threat of the wild bunch breaking in—as hap-

pened when Clay Allison attacked the *Cimarron News and Press* with sledges, then dropped the pieces into the Cimarron River, where presumably they rest today.

Consider the courage of the *Deseret News*, from the beginning one of the West's great newspapers. During the Mormon insurrection of 1857-1858, it fled Salt Lake City and was published fugitively in outlying settlements. Unable to obtain paper, it collected rags and made its own... Paying tribute to his paper in its Centennial Edition, an editor of Santa Fe's *New Mexican* writes this: *"It is the West's oldest newspaper. Wars, fires, epidemics, hard times, and the unpredictable human equations on the frontier checkered its career. Adversity struck hard and often, but the "New Mexican" lives and still thrives."*

Obviously, these men who hauled west their Washington presses by wagon, and put their thoughts to paper, were men of rugged character. Excerpts from their columns are like fine-drawn etchings hanging today against a wall that is colorless and tame. I never tire of their word-pictures.

From the *Frontier Echo*, Jacksboro, Texas: *"Last Friday morning, about 4 o'clock, a fire broke out in Mollie McCabe's palace of beautiful sin. She owned the building which was completely destroyed, together with most of her household goods and wardrobe. Cause—carelessness of one of the damsels of spotted virtue."*

A subscriber once wrote to the *Tombstone Epitaph: "Your paper is well-named. An epitaph is a lie carved on a tombstone. Instead of using a chisel on stone, you use printer's ink on paper!"*

The Epitaph, perhaps the West's most quoted early newspaper, was an organ of many moods. It sounded loudest and clearest when it sent forth its rousing political calls. *"The time has come when the Bible's injunction, 'Choose ye this day whom ye serve', applies with particular force. There can be no halfway business in this matter. He who is not for law and order is against it.... The next vote polled in what is now Cochise county will be on the principles of safety to life and protection to property."*

The editor presented his stories with truthfulness, and with clarity. Witness this statement of Buckskin Frank Leslie dealing with his killing of Mike Killeen (condensed): *"On the night of the 22nd of June (1880) I was sitting on the front porch of the Cosmopolitan Hotel, in company with Mrs. Killeen; this was between 12 and 1 o'clock as near as I can recollect. I had just bid the lady goodnight, when I heard a voice behind me say, 'Take that, you s— of a b——,' and a shot was fired at the same time, the bullet from which struck me in the side of the head. I stood up immediately and found myself facing Mike Killeen. Killeen then fired the second shot, the ball striking me in the top of the head; when I saw him raise his hand to fire at me, I dropped on my knees as quickly as I could and catching him around the legs I threw him over my shoulder, but one of the chairs on which Mrs. Killeen and I had been sitting kept him from falling. I then stood up and grappled with Killeen. He was trying to get the point of his pistol toward me. I had a firm hold on his right hand with my left*

hand, and some part of his left side with my right hand. He forced the pistol from me at last and struck me on the top of the cheek with the muzzle of it. I let go of his side and turned the pistol away from me as quickly as possible; the pistol went off just then and I saw Killeen's face distinctly by the flash. He swore and groaned directly as the pistol went off, saying "Oh, my God!" and snuffling as though struck in the face or nose.... I got on my feet and we clenched and struggled a little while; during the struggle I fired again and we both fell. Killeen was the first on his feet, and made for the door and went down the hallway. I then turned into the hallway after Killeen; he, Killeen, stopped some distance down the hallway and spoke; upon seeing his hand raise as if to fire again I fell on my knees and fired at him. He turned and ran out of the hallway. I struggled along after him, half blind with blood."

This testimony of Frank Leslie's of his killing, over another man's wife, is at variance with the generally-acredited story. From this I judge that not many writers have had access to the Epitaph files for that particular date.

HERE IS another rare treat—the descriptin of a Christmas party for kiddies at Schiefflen Hall as told by the *Epitaph:*

"...many ladies and gentlemen came in, and by 2:30 the hall was comfortably filled with old and young. When the curtain was rung up a beautiful picture was revealed upon the stage. Upon the right and left were the trees, loaded with the gifts, and in the center, slowly descending from the Heavens, came old Santa Claus clad in his robes of fur and a shower of snow, the whole scene illuminated by a red light from the wings of the theater."

I have in my collection one copy of the Tin Cup Banner, of Tin Cup, Gunnison County, Colorado. It is filled with ads for Studebaker Wagons, Feed Sable, old hotels, the Beatty Organ, Hostetter's Bitters, Kidney-Wort, and Lydia Pinkham's. A real adventure in old-fashioned reading. There is a story of a young man who is going to hold a party for himself:

"Frank Pearson, one of the most popular young men in this camp, and who is now proprietor of the Pacific Hotel, has concluded to celebrate a birthday of his own by giving a grand ball at the hotel on Tuesday evening, October 10th (1882), it being the 31st annual anniversary of the advent unfriendly world. The tickets, including supper, have been placed at only $2, admitting a gentleman and ladies. The supper will be about the finest one ever given in Tin Cup, as Mr. Pearson has sent to Denver for fresh oysters and such for the occasion. Should the weather be good there will be several couples from Pitkin and St. Elmo present."

Pages from the past—pages that are filled with color and with powder-smoke, with good things to eat and with another way of life!

— W. Edmunds Clausson

Daniel and The Humbug

Shamus Barnes didn't know how he could defend young Steward, when Mel refused to state his alibi. But there was a chance that the framers were being a little too eager and overconfident . . .

By LeRoy Boyd

THE TOWN was Prairie Wells. Shamus Barnes, tramp printer and a man of parts, shook off the weariness of his journey as he approached the plaza and sat up straight in the saddle. Lucifer, the superannuated plug he rode, shuffled into a canter that was faintly reminiscent of old cavalry days; both man and beast liked to make an entrance into a town with a flourish.

Shamus circled the plaza to the south side of the courthouse, and turned in to the hitch rail before the false-fronted shop of Colonel Ingraham's *Herald*. Later, he would ride out to see his friends, Mel and Abbie Stewart, who he hoped would invite him to supper; but first he had to see about a job.

He dismounted, stepped up on the boardwalk, slapped dust from the

black frock coat which he wore unbuttoned to add to the illusion of a couple more inches around his girth, and settled the gray beaver firmly on his head.

He sent a quick glance towards the *Dobie Dollar* on the corner. A warm twinkle flashed in his deep blue eyes when he saw that Bill Shaw was still in business; there was a gentleman he'd have to call on as soon as he could.

Colonel Ingraham saw him through the window. When Shamus walked in he had a bottle of blackberry brandy on his desk.

"Shamus!" The Colonel had grown stout since the War; his voice, though, had lost none of its booming quality. He shook hands with the old tramp printer and handed him a glass. A smile took shape beneath his white, flowing moustache. "Am I glad to see you!"

Shamus raised his glass, peered for a moment at the play of light on the brandy. By common consent he was the best at his trade this side of the Missouri, and welcome in the shops where he deigned to stop and work a few days; but he'd never received such an effusive greeting as the Colonel was giving him now.

He took a sip of the drink and looked at the Colonel. "You always were a good judge of liquor, sir."

"Plenty more when you finish that." The Colonel gave him an affable smile. "And the job you left is still waiting for you back there, Shamus."

A frown plowed a furrow across Shamus' forehead. Usually, in the shops where he was known, the subject of work was handled so that it appeared he was just coming in to do a favor for a friend.

"I'm simply swamped," the Colonel explained. "Mel Stewart's trial is starting in the morning, and since I'm bailiff I'll have to be in court."

"Mel Stewart? What's he done?"

"They've got him up for murder!"

A coldness ran down into Shamus' thin legs. He stared at the Colonel while he pulled a finger across the end of his long, hooked nose. "Who?"

"Pete Yoder."

"Don't believe it!"

"Somebody did, though; and Mel and Yoder had a ruckus here on the street that afternoon. Something about a fence Mel was putting up. Yoder had the best of it, and several heard Mel say he'd get Yoder if it was the last thing he ever did." Colonel Ingraham folded his hands over his paunch. "Shot him in the back."

"Then it wasn't Mel; he comes of quality."

"Back home. But out here family doesn't count so much."

The Colonel scratched at his right ear. "Trouble is—Mel's making things hard for himself. Wasn't home that night and won't say where he was. I understand Frank Wentworth's worked up a pretty strong case against the boy."

"Who's his attorney?"

"Nobody; says he's not guilty and don't need none."

"Like his Pa, huh?" Shamus grunted. "Bullheaded." He rose and smoothed out the front of his purple waistcoat. "Where's Abbie?"

"The Prairie House." A look of concern settled on the Colonel's face. "Wait a minute, Shamus; what about this job? I'm already three galleys behind this week—"

"I'll see you later."

SHAMUS walked out before the Colonel could fill the glasses again. He paused on the walk and stared vacantly at the wall-eyed Lucifer while he tussled with the half-formed thoughts tumbling around in his head.

He was a printer because his old man had had an idea every boy should know a trade of some kind. When he'd grown older, however, he'd gone into the office of an attorney in Rich-

mood to read law and was admitted to the bar. When the War came along, though, he'd put aside his Blackstone for the time being.

In 1865 when it was all over he'd come west to Colorado. Those four years had left him restless, and he'd returned to his trade so he could travel to wherever he might take a notion...

Colonel Ingraham had come to the doorway and was watching him. He spoke to break Shamus' string of reflections. Shamus shook his head, stepped out in the street and untied his horse, swung up in the saddle and turned the old plug in one direction of the livery barn.

●

Abbie Stewart had come to town to be near her husband while he was in jail. They were poor—just as any other young couple getting started—and she had taken a job at the hotel.

Shamus registered at the desk and told Pop Simpson he'd like a word with Abbie before he went to his room. Pop moved his spectacles up on his forehead and squinted at Shamus. "I'll call her," he said, and waddled off towards the kitchen.

When she came, Shamus noticed at once her dark brown eyes had lost their sparkle. She attempted a smile, though, as she said, "Shamus Barnes! Didn't expect to see you."

"And I'd hoped to see you in different circumstances." He sent a glance at Pop who'd slipped in behind the desk again. "But let's go where we can talk."

He took her by the arm and conducted her to a corner of the lobby where they wouldn't be heard by Pop. She sat down in one of the chairs and straightened out the white apron she'd put on to wait tables during the supper hour. He swung another chair around and settled his lanky frame in it.

He watched her for a short space of time. She seemed such a little thing. However, she had an indomitable courage.

After a bit he said, "How's things been going, Abbie?"

"All right—I guess." A touch of color ran into her cheeks and, somewhat defensively, she added, "We needed some extra money, so—I asked Mr. Simpson for a job."

He leaned forward, his gaze probing at the bitterness she had created for protection against the world. "First thing I heard when I got to town this afternoon was that Mel's in trouble."

"Shamus—he didn't do it!" she flared vehemently. "Mel didn't kill Yoder! I don't care what they say!"

He nodded silently and waited until the stress of her emotion had begun to subside. "No cause to worry if Mel is innocent. Main thing to do is to prove they've got the wrong man."

"But how? Tell me that, Shamus—how?"

He drew a finger across the end of his nose and lowered his eyes. "Well—ought to be a way. Sort of figured I'd go have a talk with the boy. Thought I'd find out what you know first, though."

"I don't know much—only that Mel was gone that night. When he came home about three o'clock that morning, Sheriff Benson was there waiting for him. If Mel would only tell them where he was!"

She glanced towards the dining room and rose to her feet. "I'll have to be getting to work. But, Shamus—" She reached and clutched his arm. "If you *could* do something!"

A smile softened his features. "I'm just an old duffer, Abbie; but if you want me to—I'll see."

●

Shamus left her and made his way to the courthouse. He found Benson in his office and got the sheriff to

let him into Mel's cell. When Benson had gone and they were alone Shamus gave the boy a warm grin and said, "Never expected to find you in here."

Mel walked the three steps to the end of the cell, came back to glare at Shamus. He growled, "What do you want?"

"Better take it easy, son; Abbie asked me to come." Shamus sniffed and a hoarse rumble sounded in his throat. "Happen I used to know a little something about law, and she had an idea I might help you."

"Abbie?" Mel's truculence drained from him. He sat down on the bunk and raked his fingers through his blond hair. Suddenly he lifted a glance to Shamus. "Look—if you'd slip me a gun!"

"What good would that do? Even if you did escape you'd have to hit the trail. What about Abbie then?"

"I'll send for her."

Shamus shook his head. "You'd always have to be on the run; is that the kind of life you'd ask Abbie to share with you?"

Mel beat his fist in his hand. "But, Shamus—I didn't shoot Pete Yoder. Even though he tore down that south fence I built, and then beat me up here in town—I wouldn't murder a man."

"'Course not. And everybody's going to know you wouldn't."

"Yeh?" A cynical smirk touched Mel's lips. Then, "I don't have a chance, Shamus. That's why I've got to make a break for it. Frank Wentworth figures he'll make a reputation for himself by sending me over the road. Or maybe it'll be the rope!"

The thought shook the boy. He got the makings and began to roll a cigarette, and his fingers shook so that tobacco was spilled on the floor.

"It's the jury that'll decide if you're guilty or not guilty," Shamus said. "And the thing to do is to present as good a case as possible to the jury. First thing we'll need is an alibi, for Abbie says you weren't home that night. Where'd you go?"

Mel had finished making his cigarette. He touched a light to it. "Can't tell you."

"This is no time to get obstinate." Shamus paused. His gaze narrowed as he studied the boy. "You understand that whatever you say here is just between you and me."

MEL APPEARED to ponder that for a moment. "I went to see Sharron Davies," he said. When Shamus raised a quizzical eyebrow he added, "She was a dancehall girl at the *Black Spade*."

"That the reason you didn't want to tell Abbie?"

A flush spread over Mel's cheeks. "Wasn't like you think," he snapped. "She's a girl I used to know back home. Of course—that wasn't her real name."

"Makes no difference about the name—just so she can furnish your alibi. I'll go talk with her right away."

"You can't; she's gone. I sent her back to her people."

Shamus snagged a black cigar from a pocket. He stuck it in his mouth and forgot to light it. "Maybe I can ask for a postponement until we can get hold of her."

"She's out of it!"

"Mel, this is no time for chivalry."

"Can't help it; gave my word nobody'll ever know of the scrape she got into." Mel's shoulders stiffened. "It was just a rattlebrained notion to come out West, and first thing she knew she was in that dump. Asked me to help her get out of it. So she's gone now, and back home her reputation will be as good as it ever was."

"You're a fool, Mel!" Shamus finally got his cigar lit. He drew on it with short explosive puffs while he peered at the boy. "But the kind of a fool your Pa would be proud of."

"Knew you'd understand."

Shamus dug a knuckle in the corner of an eye. "I understand; and

I'll see if we can't figure out something else."

A warning cough interrupted their conversation, and the sheriff appeared with a supper tray. "See you in the morning," Shamus told Mel, and when Benson unlocked the door he stepped out in the corridor.

He followed Benson to his office. The sheriff asked him to have a chair but he shook his head. "Wanted to tell you," he said, "you got the wrong man back there."

"Maybe." Benson sat down and filled an old battered pipe. "Just the same, district attorney's got a pretty strong case against the kid. Has even dug up a couple fellows seen him do it."

"Who?"

The sheriff scratched a match on the bottom of his chair. "Don't think he'd want me to say."

"Well, don't then!"

Shamus stomped out of the office. He walked to the south entrance of the courthouse, halted there until he could get a better hold on his anger. He caught sight of Colonel Ingraham hurrying towards him, and an idea flashed in his brain.

The Colonel drew near. He had a hopeful grin. Before he could say anything, though, Shamus snapped, "Colonel, who're these fellows Wentworth's got who claim they saw that shooting?"

"Tex Lowder and Red Alson—used to work for Yoder." The Colonel gulped in a breath of air. "If you could come in for just a little while—maybe set up a galley—"

"Sorry—busy." Shamus jerked at the corners of his purple waistcoat. "Have to go see Bill Shaw."

He shouldered abruptly past the Colonel and headed for the *Dobie Dollar*...

JUDGE DUNCAN was three-quarters bald and had a nose an eagle might have envied. This morning his dyspepsia was bothering him more than usual.

He settled down in the big high backed chair behind the table that served as a desk and rested a haggard jaw in the palm of his hand. For a moment he forgot how badly he felt as his gaze came finally to Shamus who was sitting between Mel and Abbie.

"Shamus Barnes!" he whooped. "What're you doing here?"

Shamus rose. He made a bow that recalled the old days in Richmond. "Your servant, sir; I have the honor to represent the defendant in this matter."

"Hunh!" Judge Duncan planted his elbows on the table and leaned his weight on them. Some of his judicial stiffness was returning to him, but a smile tugged at his lips. "Tell me—is it true what I heard about you preaching a revival up at Spring Valley three-four months ago?"

"The good folks there wanted a church, and as they didn't have a preacher I helped them out a few days."

"No better calling then the cloth. Ahem, yes—unless it should be the law. Well, anyway, Shamus—glad to see you again."

"Your Honor—I object." Frank Wentworth was on his feet. He came briskly around the corner of his table.

He was too young to have been in the War; he was old enough, though, to have an ambition to run against the Honorable James B. Grant for governor next year, and if he could make a good record with this trial...

Judge Duncan scowled. "What do you object about?"

Wentworth was a handsome fellow, and he bore an air of asssurance with as much ease as the tailor made blue suit he wore. He'd dressed carefully this morning, and the barber had done a good job on his face.

"I'm sure the court has the inter-

ests of the defendant in mind," he said. "It is also the court's duty to appoint counsel if the defendant should not be represented—"

"Where've you been the last five minutes?"

"What I was getting at—seems to be beneath the dignity of this Court to permit a tramp—a printer, preacher, and whatnot—"

Judge Duncan slammed a fist down on the table. "You're entirely out of order, young man. And I'll inform you that my good friend, Shamus Barnes, is a gentleman; served with distinction with that great soldier, Jeb Stuart. He can be a printer, a preacher or anything else he wants to, but I happen to know he was admitted to the bar in Virginia in 1861. And that is sufficient for this Court!"

WENTWORTH realized his attempt to belittle his opposition had been a mistake. He'd also momentarily forgotten that Judge Duncan had been with Robert E. Lee. "I apologize," he muttered. "I'll withdraw my remarks—only had in mind—"

"You tend to your knitting, Frank, and you'll get along a lot better." Judge Duncan swung his glance to Shamus. "By the way, the Court is always anxious to see justice served. And if the counsel for the defendant should desire a little more time—"

Shamus rubbed a finger on the end of his nose. He looked at Mel, and the boy leaned towards him and whispered, "Let's get it over with—the sooner the better."

Shamus pulled himself to his feet. He caught Colonel Ingraham staring at him, and he wondered if it wouldn't have been better if he were over there right now setting type in the Colonel's shop.

"If it please the Court, sir, the defense is ready," he said.

Judge Duncan grunted. "So be it then. Mr. Clerk, proceed with the selection of a jury."

Shamus used a number of challenges—not so much for cause as to quiet the insistence of his conscience that he was a fraud. He hoped Mel and Abbie would believe he was working for the best jury he could get, but he had misgivings that others would consider him a humbug. And so far as possible he avoided Judge Duncan's eyes...

●

When the twelve men had finally been picked Wentworth rose. He strode over in front of the jury box to make his opening statement. His self confidence had returned, and he spoke with a firm and commanding voice so that everybody in the room could hear.

"You gentlemen," he said, as he concluded the argument, "are acquainted with Holy Writ. You know that it says—" He paused and fumbled with a slip of paper in his hand. *"Whoso killeth any person shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses...at the mouth of two witnesses shall he that is worthy of death be put to death."*

He stopped suddenly. His gaze held intently on the jury while an expectant quiet settled over the crowd. "And at the proper time," he added, "I shall produce two eye-witnesses who saw Mel Stewart kill Pete Yoder."

He walked back to his table and sent a glance at his opponent. Shamus shook his head, and his rumble sounded like distant thunder in the stillness that had filled the room. "No argument."

Judge Duncan leaned forward. He cleared his throat, seemed about to speak then changed his mind.

Wentworth peered curiously at Shamus, suspicious of a trick. Shamus, however, remained silent, and Wentworth smiled and made a business of ruffling through his papers. He called

Sheriff Benson, and after the sheriff came a doctor who gave a technical lecture on the course of the lethal bullet. Then other witnesses were called to testify to the trouble between Mel Stewart and Pete Yoder and of the threats Mel had made following their fist fight. In his cross examinations Shamus seemed to be doing little more than probing for weaknesses. Wentworth had built up an air-tight case, though, and was competently working towards the climax when he should call his eye witnesses...

IT WAS ALMOST noon of the second day when Tex Lowder was asked to take the stand. When he had been sworn, Shamus lifted his loose-jointed frame off his chair and addressed Judge Duncan. "If the Court please, sir," he drawled. "Occurs to me it's about time for a recess."

Judge Duncan's dyspepsia was still bad and he needed another glass of soda, anyway. He nodded and said, "Good idea. Court's adjourned till one-thirty."

Shamus waited until Judge Duncan left the room. He got his beaver hat from beneath the table, then, and hurried out before anybody—especially Mel or Abbie—could start asking questions.

He pushed through the crowd about the doorway and went downstairs. As he started for the south entrance, he heard his name called; he turned his head to see Judge Duncan beckoning from the door of the court clerk's office.

"Like a word with you," Judge Duncan said. He moved aside, and when Shamus stepped into the office closed the door to be sure they wouldn't be disturbed. "Now tell me," he said brusquely. "Do you know just what you're doing up there?"

Shamus felt as if a half dozen butterflies had got loose in his stomach. "'Course," he growled. "Why shouldn't I?"

Judge Duncan chewed on a lip while he regarded Shamus. "If you'd resign—I can still appoint somebody else."

"You think that whippersnapper of a Wentworth can beat me?"

"I'm thinking about Mel Stewart."

"Don't worry; we'll make out."

●

As he made his way over to the *Dobie Dollar*, though, he wasn't quite so sure; perhaps after all he was just a four-flusher!

But still—a tiny notion had been jumping around in his brain since yesterday morning. Wentworth's reading of the Scripture passage had started it. If he could only get hold of it!

At the saloon, he went in and told Bill Shaw he needed a double shot of Bourbon. Bill set out his order and moved along to take care of a couple other customers. Shamus hooked a heel on the brass rail, and his fingers toyed with the glass as he studied his features in the mirror.

After a while his lips slowly formed a smile. He lifted his whiskey and swallowed it. "Oh—Bill," he said, and when the bartender had come near he added, "How'd you like to do something for me?"

"Well-l-l—anything within reason."

Shamus leaned over the bar so he could speak confidentially, and a twinkle flashed in his eyes when Bill bobbed his head.

"I'll pay the freight," Shamus said. He dropped a dollar on the bar and left in a hurry. He still had time to get some dinner...

COURT RECONVENED only fifteen minutes late that afternoon. Judge Duncan walked in and settled himself with dignity behind his table. Colonel Ingraham waved a hand

to seat the spectators, then returned to his corner to frown at Shamus while he thought of all those galleys that needed to be filled with type.

Frank Wentworth motioned Tex Lowder to the witness stand, and when Tex was in the chair once more he strode forward to conduct his examination.

The district attorney was bright; he was smart. He knew law and court procedure, and after the usual preliminary questions he handled Tex in a brilliant manner to get him to tell his story.

Wentworth was almost through with Tex when suddenly he halted. He waited a dramatic moment. He pitched his voice in that somber tone that never fails to demand attention and asked, "You saw the shooting of Pete Yoder the night he was killed?"

"That's right," Tex answered. "Me and Red."

"You recognized the man who shot Yoder?"

"Huh-uh. Seen him clear as day. It was Mel Stewart!"

"Why—" Mel started angrily to get up. Shamus caught his arm and held him still. He reached for Abbie's hand and gave her a reassuring smile.

"That's *one*," Wentworth muttered, as if to himself but loud enough for the jury to hear. He turned a sardonic look to Shamus. "Your witness."

Shamus pushed back his chair. He got up slowly and jerked down the corners of his purple waistcoat. "If the Court please, sir," he said in the direction of Judge Duncan, and stepped around his table to move to a spot in front of the witness stand.

"One or two points we'd like to get clear," he told Tex. "You say you saw the shooting; about what time did it take place?"

Tex relaxed. He had expected a real attack. "About one o'clock in the morning."

"You also say Red Alson was with you; just where were you?"

"Around the corner of the *Dobie Dollar*. We was in the alley, and when we heard them arguing we slipped up alongside the building to see what was going on."

"That's all," Shamus said abruptly. Heedless of Wentworth's supercilious smile he returned to his chair.

Wentworth glanced over his shoulder at the crowd and called for Mister Alson; Red, however, wasn't present.

A moment went by, and a wave of whispers swept through the room. Judge Duncan raucously cleared his throat and scratched nervously at the black oilcloth cover of his table. "Well?" he grunted.

"I'll have the sheriff go find him," Wentworth said.

Benson hefted up his belt, grabbed for his hat and hurried out. He was back shortly and conducted Red to the stand.

"Now, then—" Wentworth said. The wait had nettled him a bit, but as soon as he was on his feet his confidence grew strong again. He fired his questions with incisive sharpness, and watching the jury he was pleased to see he was making an impression on them. And when he had finished with Red he said, "That's *two*," and turned Red over to Shamus for cross examination.

SHAMUS approached close to the stand. A gleam flared in his old blue eyes when he sniffed the odor of Red's breath. Bill Shaw had indeed proved to be a friend!

"You and Tex Lowder say you were together the night Pete Yoder was killed," Shamus said gravely. "And you both saw the shooting; about what time was it?"

"Around one o'clock in the morning!"

A trembling took hold of Shamus' thin legs, and he had to spread his

[Turn To Page 132]

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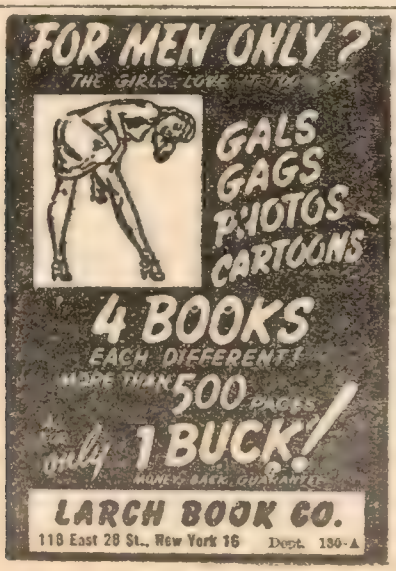
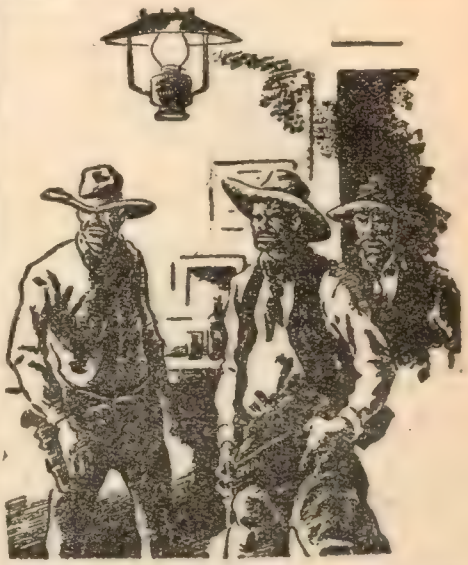


feet apart and brace his knees to hold himself erect. He drew a finger across the end of his long, beaked nose, and as he prepared to put his next question he had the feeling of a gambler staking his last dollar on the turn of a card.

"Where were you at the time?"

"We was in that passageway between McNamara's store and the barbershop. We heard the racket—"

"Just a minute!" Wentworth barked.



Shamus grinned like a horse. "McNamara's store in on the *south* side of the street—isn't it?" he drawled. "And the *Dobie Dollar* on the *north?*"

"Of course." Red tried to look past Shamus to see what was wrong with Wentworth. "Everybody knows that."

Shamus swung around to Wentworth. "Boys forgot to get together on that one," he jeered. "Just like a couple fellows in a somewhat similar case you can read about in your Holy Writ."

"Your Honor!" The district attorney advanced on Judge Duncan. "I moved that this man's testimony be stricken from the record."

Judge Duncan hammered for order

[*Turn To Page* 124]

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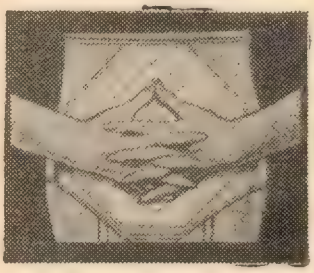

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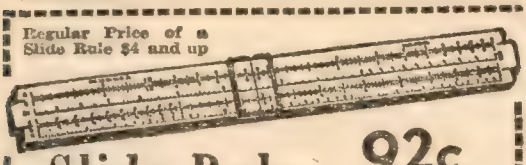
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in the court. At the same time he roared, "You trying to impeach your own witness?"

Wentworth sputtered. He no longer had any thoughts of running for governor next year. "Hope you don't think," he said, "that I had anything to do with what has been revealed as an attempt to pervert justice."

"That'll depend, young man, on what action you take now."

The trial was over; one look at the jury was enough to convince a person of that. But the case wasn't closed yet.

Sheriff Benson yelled for somebody to grab Pete. He hustled across the open space inside the railing. His hand shot forward to drag Red from the witness chair. "Just what did you have to do with it?" he snapped.

"Nothing," Red stammered. He was bewildered by not being able to understand what was going on here. "Only when Pete fired us, he didn't pay us all we had coming, and Tex thought—"

"And so you slipped up and shot him in the back! And you saw a chance to lay it on Mel—"

Red's wits hadn't all deserted him. "Not me—Tex!" he said.

SHAMUS walked slowly back to his table and picked up his gray beaver. He saw Abbie crying, and Mel was blinking his eyes. He gave them a wink, turned and pushed his way through the crowd. He went downstairs and made for the *Dobie Dollar*.

[*Turn To Page* 126]

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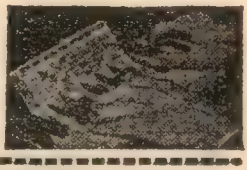

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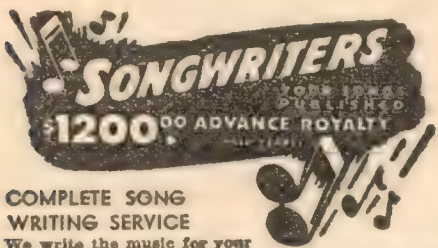

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"Done what you asked me," Bill told him with a grin. "Kept Red here till they come for him. But say—that hombre sure can drink. Two dollars and six bits worth!"

"Add a double shot of Bourbon to it—and take one yourself," Shamus asked. The old familiar twinkle flashed in his eyes as he reached for the glass Bill shoved toward him. "Ever hear of Daniel?" he asked.

Bill pondered the question a moment. "You mean—the one that got throwed in the lions' den?"

Shamus nodded. "Mighty good lawyer he was, too." He drank his whiskey and lowered the glass to the bar. "You'll find the record of his case in the Apocrypha."

Shamus was getting too deep for Bill. The bartender grinned again and mumbled, "Guess you're right."

The bat-wing doors squeaked on their hinges. Colonel Ingraham came in; he saw Shamus and hopefully approached the bar.

"Colonel, sir," Shamus said before the other had a chance to speak. "If you'll pay my bill here I'll go over and set some type for you."

"Sure—glad to." The Colonel reached happily for his wallet.

"But first," Shamus told Bill, "fill my glass again."

Shamus hooked a heel on the brass rail. He felt warm all inside. When the Colonel had made his entrance and the doors were opened wide he'd caught sight of Mel and Abbie, hand in hand, leaving the courthouse.

★

INDIAN SIGN LANGUAGE

by The Lawdog

IT IS JUST possible that you might get lost among the Indians of the plains. Just in case you want to say a few words, here is how you can use the Indian Sign-Language.

•

SIOUX: Pass the right hand open, palm down and horizontal, fingers extended from left to right across the throat. "Cut throat"—indicating their character and habit.

•

CHEYENNE: The index-finger of the left hand (or the whole hand) is held horizontally in front of the body. The index finger of the right hand is

[*Turn Page*]

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How many times have you wished there were some way you could impress another favorably — *get across to him or her your ideas?* That thoughts can be transmitted, received, and understood by others is *now* scientifically demonstrable.

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then passed across it several times as if cutting.

●

WOMAN: Right hand, fingers open but joined, back to front, is passed with a circular, sweeping motion to the right side of face and head, indicating flowing hair.

●

DAY: Hands open, fingers extended, palms upward, are carried from front and center of body to each side and held horizontal and motionless, backs down; indicating "all open."

●

NIGHT: Hands open, fingers extended and joined, palms down, are carried to center of body and crossed right hand above but not touching, and held motionless; indicating "all closed."

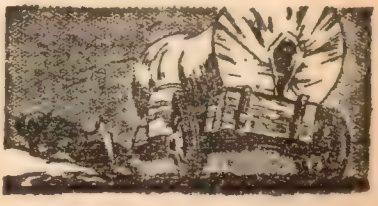
●

MARRIAGE: Indices of right and left hands joined side by side, backs up, in front of body, thumbs and other fingers closed.

●

MAN: Index finger of right hand held erect before the face, back to front; push slightly outwards and upwards.

★



MEDICAL RESEARCH DISCOVERS TREATMENT FOR

PIMPLES

Acne, Blackheads, and other externally caused Skin Blemishes

CAUSES OF PIMPLES AND BLACKHEADS SEEN THROUGH POWERFUL MICROSCOPE

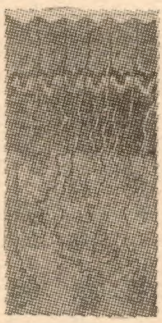
DON'T LET UGLY PIMPLES BLEMISH YOUR PERSONALITY RUIN YOUR CONFIDENCE OR SPOIL YOUR TALENTS!

DO YOU feel your skin is holding back your chances for popularity . . . for success? Are you *afraid* people whom you'd like to know will *reject* you? Thousands of people who felt the same as you—now have clear attractive complexions. They've regained their poise and confidence. You can benefit from their experience!

SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH REVEALS NEGLECT CAUSE OF MANY SKIN TROUBLES

Skin Specialists and Medical statistics tell us that broken out skin usually occurs from adolescence and can continue on through adulthood. Adolescents often carry these scars throughout their life. Many never get over the "feeling of embarrassment" and are always conscious of their appearance and complexion. Persistent cases of "bad skin" sometimes continue on through adulthood. In this stage of life, the responsibilities of earning a living and meeting people are essential if you are to climb the ladder of success in your job. It is doubly important to give your skin problems *immediate care.* Physicians state that to neglect your skin may prolong your skin troubles and make it more difficult to clear up. And, there is no better time to get pimples under control than NOW!

Laboratory analysis using special microscopes gives us the scientific facts regarding those unsightly pimples. High-powered lenses show your skin consists of several outer layers. Projecting through this epidermis, are hairs, the ducts of the sweat glands and the tiny tubes of the sebaceous glands which supply the skin with oil to keep it soft and pliable. Skin specialists will tell you that many skin eruptions can often be traced to an over-secretion, of oil from the sebaceous glands. As a result of this over-secretion, more oil than is normally required by the skin is deposited on the outside of the skin. Unless special care is taken, this excessive oil forms an oily coating which is a catch-all for all foreign matter in the air. When dust, dirt, lint, etc. become embedded into the tiny skin openings and block them up, they can cause the pores to become enlarged and therefore even more susceptible to additional dirt and dust. These enlarged, blocked up pores may form blackheads as soon as they become infected and bring you the worry, despair, embarrassment and humiliation of pimples, blackheads and other externally caused blemishes.



Illustrated is a microscopic reproduction of a healthy skin:

The sebaceous glands are shown as they project through the many layers of skin. In a normal skin, the openings of the gland tubes are not blocked and permit the oil to flow freely to the outside of the skin.

DOCTORS RECOMMEND THIS TREATMENT

Physicians report two important ways to control this condition: First, they prescribe clearing the pores of clogging matter; and second, inhibit the excessive oiliness of the skin.

To help overcome these two conditions, Scope Products' research make available two scientifically-tested formulas that contain clinically proven ingredients. The first formula contains special cleansing properties not found in ordinary cold creams or skin cleansers. Thoroughly, but gently, it removed all surface scales, dried sebaceous matter, dust, dirt and debris—leaving your skin wonderfully soft, smooth and receptive to proper treatment. The second formula acts to reduce the excessive oiliness produced by the overactive sebaceous glands. Its active ingredients also help prevent the spread of infection by killing bacteria often associated with externally caused pimples, blackheads and blemishes.

DON'T SPREAD INFECTION BY SQUEEZ'NG PIMPLES AND BLACKHEADS

Clinical reports state that many people squeeze out pimples and blackheads with their fingers. This is unsanitary and may lead to the spread of the infection. This abuse may also inflame your skin and leave red welts and ugly looking blotches and bumps. As a result your face may be covered with pimples and blemishes. Soon you'll be sorry you ever squeezed or picked at your skin by using this unscientific method to get rid of skin eruptions.

COVERS UP UNSIGHTLY BLEMISHES WHILE MEDICATION DOES ITS WORK

To remove the immediate embarrassment of skin blemishes, Scope Medicated Skin Formula helps conceal while it medicates! Unlike many other skin preparations, Scope Formula has a *pleasant fragrance!* Imagine! The moment you apply the Scope Treatment to your skin you can instantly face the immediate present with greater confidence in your appearance. At the same time, you are sure that the medication is acting to remove externally caused blemishes and helping to prevent new ones. This "cover-up" action gives you peace of mind. No longer need you suffer from the feeling of self-consciousness or inferiority. Make this your first step in the direction of a clear complexion and skin that's lovable to kiss and touch!

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED OR DOUBLE YOUR MONEY BACK

We make this guaranteed offer because so many users of Scope Medicated Skin Formula have written us telling how it helped to clear up their complexion. We want you to try the Scope Double Treatment at *our risk.* Just a few minutes of your time each day can yield more gratifying results than you ever dreamed possible! If you are not delighted in every way by the improved condition and general appearance of your skin IN JUST 10 DAYS, simply return the unused portion and we will refund not just the price you paid — but DOUBLE YOUR MONEY BACK! You have everything to gain . . . *and we take all the risk!* We want all teen-agers, men and women of all ages to get a fresh, new glowing outlook on life. We want you to be the inviting social personality you might be and to help you reach highest success possible in business. Now you can give yourself new hope and bring back that happy joyous feeling of confidence, poise and popularity!

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THE REAL WEST

(continued from page 8)

Some of the boys used the wet-blanket technique. The branding in this case was done with an iron through a wet blanket, the result being a job that didn't betray the fact it had been recently made.

Will James worked for a cowman who really showed the effect of some kind of scientific education. The old gent would purchase the necessary ingredients and turn out a finished product known in the laboratory as acid. This he kept, of course, in a bottle; all that was necessary to change a brand was to dip a twig into that bottle of acid, work over the old brand and change it into the new brand; the result was one which defied inspection. From the outside it had all the appearance of an old brand with some grey hairs showing. If it came to a showdown, and the animal was killed and skinned, you still couldn't tell the brand had been changed when you checked the skin.

The sheriff and his deputies; the tough stock detective; and the boys from the ranch all did their bit to make the life of any rustler dangerous and rather uncertain. At the worse, a rope and the nearest tree were used instead of a trial; at the best, there was a stretch in the penitentiary. Rustling was tough work and, sad as it seems, the returns were usually rather low.

●

BAD LEG—BAD MEDICINE

In dealings with the Indian, it was necessary for the army officer to understand the workings of the redman's mental processes; a miscalculation might result in bloody tragedy. An army officer, having lost a leg in the service, had it skillfully replaced by one of light hollow wood, with open slits. He visited the lodge of a distinguished Sioux Chief. After trying to stir up some conversation, the officer had what he thought was a brilliant idea. He observed a knitting needle in the hand of the chief's old wife. This was an opportunity to show he had great magic and win the chief's respect, so he took the knitting needle and passed it through his leg.

This at once attracted the notice of all Indians in the lodge. The chief made signs, asking to see the leg. Stripping up his pantaloons the officer managed to show the artificial limb, but concealed its connection with the rest of his leg. After a long and minute examination the chief asked if the other leg was the same. The amused officer replied, "Yes." Thereupon the chief took him by the shoulders and thrust him out of the lodge as "bad medicine."

●

INDIAN APPETITE

The ability of the Indian to consume large amounts of food was remarkable. Colonel Richard Dodge tells of two such incidents. Once he was on a hunt with an escort of twenty infantry soldiers and seven Pawnee Indians. On the second day a buck elk was killed, gross weight not less than seven hundred pounds. The meat was cut up and divided. The Indians danced and feasted all night long, then came to Colonel Dodge in the morning for more meat. Doing a bit of calculation, he figured that the Pawnees had averaged in the night's feast, at least fifteen pounds each, with fullest allowance for bone.

At another time an old Indian was employed as guide at a military post. He was well-liked by the officers of the garrison and was always invited to sit down if he happened to be in an officer's quarters at meal time. The Indian soon found out that the officers breakfasted at different times. Hence he was able to eat four hearty breakfasts in a morning. Seems he was a bit ashamed of eating too much at any one breakfast!

★

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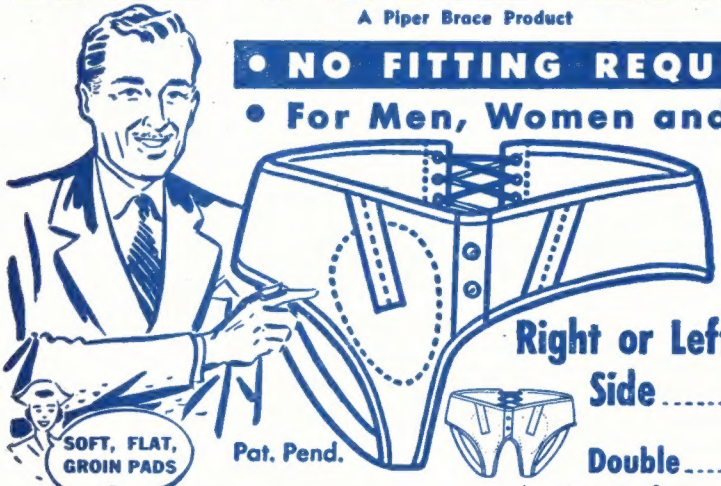

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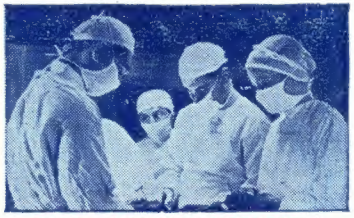

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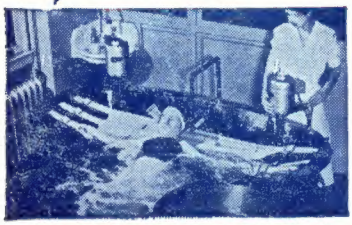

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